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*"My
cigarette?
Camels,
of course!"*



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THE WOMAN'S COLLEGE of the UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO, N. C.

Editor's Notes

THE SPRING ISSUE of the CORADDI, student magazine of the Woman's College, is given over to the material chosen by the student-faculty reading committee for the Seventh Arts Forum, March 9-11. The general discussion of this material is to be held in the afternoon of March 11, Alumnae House, by the Forum writing critics: Richard P. Blackmur and Lionel Trilling. Conferences for individual criticism will be scheduled with the visiting critics and with the Woman's College resident writers, Randall Jarrell and Peter Taylor.

THE COMMITTEE OF READERS: Mary Elliott, Jean Farley, Joanne McLean, Ellen Metz, Marilyn Shaw; Professors Randall Jarrell, Jane Summerell, Peter Taylor, Sanchia Thayer, Marc Friedlaender, *chairman*.

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JAMES K. RIVES:

The Boy

In the big, high-ceilinged room the old man lay dying. He had been dying for some time now, slowly, because the cancer had eaten up his liver and his body was starving. The old man lay flatly on his back with his thin legs out straight, and the sheet drawn up over his big chest to his chin. The boy always admired the big chest which stood out so plainly now that the old man's stomach had sunk down into a bone formed by his hip bones and the lower part of his chest. Even now the old man refused to use a bed pan, and when the boy held him up so that he could make water, his fingers felt the huge out-bowed ribs as hard and stiff as iron under the thin flesh. When he bathed him the boy took pride in the perfectness with which the old man's bones were put together, the strong joints and wide, flat wrist bones, and knew that the old man must have been as strong and quick as a young man as they said he was. He could remember none of this strength for the man was already old and tired when the boy was born. But once the old man had taken the boy rabbit hunting; and the boy watching the quick smooth way the old man handled the gun when the rabbit broke cover remembered the stories of the old man's power as a bird shot, especially in the pine thickets with the thin winter light flickering through, and how once a rich man, a famous sportsman, had come down all the way from Chicago and spent two weeks with the old man, then a young man, and had said over the last whisky before going back that the old man was the best bird shot he had ever met.

The boy was sitting in a chair a few feet away from the bed and slightly to the foot so that he could look at the old man's face. He had a book open on his lap and he was reading when anyone came in. And the boy looked at the old man's face and remembered.

When the boy had come back from overseas he had brought them all presents, but he hadn't known how to give a present to the old man and that night he had waited until only he and the old man were in the living room and had finally said, "I brought everybody else a present, Sir. I didn't know exactly what to get you. I just thought I'd give you the money," and the old man had thanked him and had looked separately at several different objects in the room and not at the boy and they had both begun to talk of something.

And now the old man was dying and it was too late.

It was a long time ago, and in Atlanta, and the man and the boy were walking uptown going to a hotel where a phone booth was, so that the man could call over long distance to see about a job, and a sudden longing for an ice cream cone had entered the boy's soul, a nickel cone, a nickel cone of vanilla, and he had said, "Papa"—and again after a pause, "Papa"—then, "Can I have a ice cream cone, Papa?" and the man's face had wrinkled and he had said, "Augh, Son." And the two had walked on together and the boy wished he had never heard of ice cream.

This time they were living on a farm and he was in the sixth grade and the man was helping him with his arithmetic. The man would put down figures on the paper and say "Now look, Son," and then look at his face and the boy knew that the man could tell that he didn't understand, and then the man would point at different places on the paper with his pencil and look at the boy's face again, and finally tears began to seep out of the boy's eyes and the man had thrown the pencil down on the table and said, "Damn—Sarah—I can't teach him anything, Honey. He's stupid."

And another time and in another town it was summer and in the late morning. The boy was sitting on a bench under a tree, and the man and the boy's mother were sitting on the side porch. The mother was sewing on something and the man was

rocking with short, quick motions and little tappings of his small feet each time the chair came forward. And the mother had said, "Sam," without looking up from her sewing, "Sam, I heard you had a fight at the dance last night."

"Yes'm."

"Were you all mad when you were fighting, Sam?"

"No'm, we weren't especially mad. I don't know, we were just sort of fighting."

"I hear you broke Ed's nose. Did you?"

The man tapped his feet more rapidly when the chair came forward, and began to move his hands about on the arms of the chair and to shift his heavy shoulders.

"Ah, I don't know, Mama, his nose might have got broken, we were fighting."

"Well, Sam, I hope you apologized to Ed."

"Apologize? Apologize! Damn. What would he want to apologize for, Sarah? He whipped him, didn't he?" and the man began to jerk the rocker a little this way and that way and tap his feet even more rapidly.

And then they had been at a new town; they had moved in the middle of a school year and he had gone to the new school the first day, and had not wanted to go back, and the man and the boy's mother had ridden him to school the next day in the car. The boy sat between them on the front seat and when they had stopped at the school he had not wanted to get out. He sat small in between them and tears seeped out of his eyes and the man said, "He's yellow, Sarah. Damn. What's he scared of? Damn. I can't understand. He's yellow, that's the trouble with him."

And now the boy was older, and when he was sitting on the porch rocking and reading, the old man would come and stand by his chair for a minute and look at what he was reading and name books that he had read a long time ago, *To the Hilt*, and books by H. Rider Haggard, and by Opie Read that he thought the boy might like. And about this time he stopped calling the old man Papa when talking to him and always called him, "Sir," speaking it as though it were a proper noun.

And every spring when the boy had been younger the man had bought him a ball and a bat and a glove. But the boy had never been able to do any of the things that you have to do to play baseball. He could neither throw the ball or hit it or catch it, and after five or six springs the man had given up.

And there was a war and they lived in another town and he had had a furlough and then had gone over seas. They had been sitting in the living room, and the taxi had blown outside and the boy and the man shook hands at the front door and looked at each other and he had said, "So long, Sir. I'll see you, Sir."

And the boy had flown his missions and had come back, and he and the old man were sitting opposite each other in the living room and the old man had asked, "Will you have to go back, Son?"

And the boy had looked at the old man, "I won't be ordered back, Sir. I don't know. They're still fighting. I couldn't stand it in a camp, Sir. I'd go crazy . . . I've got to go back, Sir."

And the old man had looked away and said, "Well."

And the boy had learned another, bigger aircraft but he hadn't gone back for the fighting was dying down, and one day his mother had phoned him long distance and he had come back to help nurse the old man.

The doctors said the old man might live another two weeks, three. And so they had brought him home, and he was lying with the sunshine coming through the open window with the noise of the taxis across the street, and the Ford Garage, and the eating place at the rear. And it was spring, and the old man was lying dying in the high ceilinged room. And the boy knew that the old man was neither lonely nor afraid, and he was dying.

About noon the boy's older brother came in and went into the kitchen and talked to the mother. After a few minutes he came into the room where the old man was. He walked over to the chair where the boy was sitting and patted him on the shoulder. "Hello, Budy, you O.K.?" and walked over and leaned one elbow on the mantel.

"Sure."

"How does Mama seem to be getting along?"

"She's O.K., Budy. She's a little tired, of course, but her nerves seem all right and she's getting a little sleep along."

The older brother walked over to the side of the bed and twitched his cigar and looked down at the old man. "Have you given him a shot lately?"

"About forty-five minutes ago."

"Did he wake up this morning?"

"No, Budy."

The older brother stood by the bed another minute or so and then came over by the boy. "Don't you want to go walk around awhile? Go up town and get a coke."

"I don't reckon so, Bud. I went for a walk a little while this morning, and I've been piddling around a little and helping Mama."

"You sleeping any?"

"Sure, Bud. I'm getting plenty of sleep."

"Well, take care of yourself, Budy. I'll drop around before I go to work in the morning."

A few minutes after he left, the old man's brother came in; he nodded to the boy and went over to the bed. He looked down at the old man for a minute. "God damn," he said. When he turned and tiptoed out, the boy could see that tears had filled his eyes and were almost overflowing.

The old man's breathing began to rasp in his throat, and the boy got up and put a little water under the dry tongue. The mother came in and he bent his head slightly so that she could kiss him on the cheek, "Hello, Mama."

"Your dinner's ready, Sam. You've got a nice piece of steak and some good," she drew the last word out as addressing a child, "cornbread sticks, and I want you to eat them while they're hot."

"Have you eaten, Mama? I'm in no particular hurry."

"I'm not hungry now, Sam, and I want you to eat while the cornbread sticks are hot. I'm going to sit down awhile and cool off. Go on and eat."

The boy went into the dining room and sat down and looked at the food. At the steak oozing melted butter and at the brown and gold cornbread sticks. Saliva began to flow under his tongue and he ate. After awhile he went back in the kitchen and got a second cup of coffee and sat drinking it and smoking a cigarette. When the cigarette was short he put it out and lit another and went over and sat in the arm chair by the window. He took a long drag on the cigarette and leaned forward in the chair with his elbows on his knees and looked out through the open window and the sunshine. A taxi whipped by and came to a noisy stop at the stand across the street. Two women came out of the little grocery store on the other corner and got into an automobile, a negro mechanic passed, a spotted dog stopped and smelled the tree growing by the sidewalk and wet it and went on; a woman passed holding a little girl by the hand. The boy put the cigarette out and went back in the room where the old man was. "I enjoyed my dinner, Mama. Those were really good cornbread sticks."

The mother smiled, "I'm glad, Sam. Now you lay down while you are 'full'," she smiled again, "as little Ethel says, and sleep some."

"Don't you want to take a nap now, Mama? I'm not particularly sleepy."

"I'm not sleepy now, Sam, and I've got some things I want to do. I'll go to sleep after awhile."

"Well, Wake me up if you need me."

"I will, Sam. Don't you want another pillow?"

"No, Mama. This is fine." The boy lay on his back with his teeth together and a little frown between his eyes. After several minutes he began to twitch his hands and move his feet. Once or twice he breathed in sharply and jerked his head up off the pillow and half opened his eyes. Presently his breathing became regular and he turned over on his left side and slept.

He and his father had been hunting and it was late evening and they had walked a great distance and they were in the midst of deserted fields and the country was strange to him. And suddenly he was carrying his father's gun and his father was not there but it was all right for he remembered now that his father had told him that he would meet him somewhere and it was night and he was on a broad paved highway before a long rickety wooden bridge over a great river which led to the scattered dim lights of a spread city. And a woman in a car without any lights drove up and stopped and he got in and the car started across the bridge and his mother was bending over the old man's bed and it was beginning to be dark outside. The boy reached for a pack of cigarettes on the floor beside the cot, and his mother straightened up at the sound of the match.

"Did you sleep all right, Sam?"

"Hello, Mama. How's Papa?"

"He's still asleep. He seemed restless a little while ago and I gave him another shot."

The boy sat up on the side of the cot.

"I made some fresh coffee just a little while ago, Sam. Sit still and I'll get you a cup."

"Thank you, Mama. I'll get it."

"What were you gritting your teeth about just before you woke up?"

"Was I? I didn't know. Dreaming I reckon, I don't remember."

The boy stood up and kissed his mother on the forehead. He looked at the old man and then went into the bathroom and washed his hands and face and let the water run over the back of his neck for awhile. He combed his hair before the little mirror above the wash basin and got a cup of coffee from the kitchen.

"Don't you want me to bring you some, Mama?"

"No thank you, Sam. I drank some when I first made it. What would you like for supper?"

"I don't know, I'm not hungry yet, Mama. Are you going to eat anything?"

"Not now, that coffee I drank awhile ago is all I want. But you should."

"I'm not hungry, Mama. We will both eat when you get up. You'd better take a shower now and get some sleep."

"I don't feel like sleeping now, Sam."

"Well, take a shower anyway. It will make you feel better."

"All right, I'll do that. It's been kind of warm today."

While the mother was gone the boy made up the little cot, stretching the bottom sheet tight and fluffing up the pillow. Presently the mother returned from the shower in a night gown and a cotton house coat.

"Why don't you lay down now, Mama, and get some sleep?"

"I'm not sleepy, Sam."

"Yes'm, but you're tired. Go on, Mama, and rest. I made the cot up for you."

"Well, I'll lay down for awhile."

"You'd better try to sleep." The boy leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. "You are tired, I know. I'll get the light out of your eyes." The boy lit a candle and turned the light off.

"In case I do go to sleep, Sam, give your papa another shot about nine."

"All right. You sleep now, Mama, and I'll call you after while."

The mother lay on her back with her hands tucked under the edge of the pillow on each side. Gradually her face relaxed. She turned over on her right side, shifted around a little and presently she slept. The boy sat by the bed and looked at the old man. The moon came up and a mocking bird somewhere

in the middle of the next block began to sing. A taxi checked in at the stand across the street. Down around the next corner a dog began to bark. One, two, three—the clock on the tower of the Presbyterian church struck nine and he went into the kitchen and put some water on to boil so he could sterilize the needle. When he came back the old man was sitting up in the bed. The boy put his hand behind the old man's back, "Sir." He could feel the hard unyielding bone of the old man under the pajamas, "Sir." The old man turned his head, "Jesus God! God damn! Damn!" He swayed and the boy eased him back against the pillow and sat down and looked at him. The church clock struck the half hour and the water in the kitchen was all boiled away.

At first when the boy had come back and was sitting by the old man at night, he would hold one of the dry hands firmly in his and wish some of the strength of his own body back to the old man. Now he just sat and looked at the old head and heard the breath whisper in and out of the drawn lips. The mocking bird had come closer now and seemed to sing against some injury the moon had done it. The church clock struck ten. The last note died away and the room was still.

The boy felt for a pulse on the left wrist, then put his hand under the pajama top and on the sticky, cool flesh over the heart. He lit another candle and pulled off his shoes and went into the bathroom in his stocking feet and brought back a basin of warm water. He bathed off the face and trunk of the body and put clean pajamas on it and brushed its hair. He put clean sheets on the bed and drew the top sheet up to the corpse's chin. He put a pillow under its head and closed the eyes and held them so until they stiffened in place. He telephoned the doctor and the funeral home. The doctor would make out a death certificate

in the morning. The man at the funeral home said that they would be around in thirty minutes. The boy went back into the bathroom and put the stopper in the basin and held his hands over it and poured a bottle of isopropyl alcohol over his hands, holding the bottle first in one hand and then in the other while he poured. Then he rubbed the alcohol that had been caught in the basin over both hands and washed his hands with hot water and soap. He put two teaspoons of aromatic spirits of ammonia in a water glass and filled the glass half full of water. Then he went back into the room and turned on the lights and put the glass down beside the cot where his mother was sleeping. He put his hands on her shoulders and said softly, "Mama," and again, "Mama." When she awoke he held her gently back against the bed. She lay, quiet for a moment, then looked at him. He nodded his head. "You want some ammonia, Mama?"

"No. You're sweet, Sam."

"How long ago?"

"About thirty minutes."

"Have you bathed him?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Called the funeral home and everything?"

"They said they would be around in thirty minutes."

"I'd better get up and get dressed."

His mother dressed, and she and Sam sat in the living room. In a few minutes the people from the funeral home came and she got up and went to the door and then came back in the living room and sat down. Sam heard the little rubber tires of the cot out of the hearse making a crisp whisper across the hall linoleum. In a few minutes it returned, making a slightly crisper sound, and the front screen door closed carefully after it.

ALICE BRUMFIELD:

The Fishing Camp

The lake was so still that I could stand up in the boat without swaying. The lake was smooth except occasionally where there were wrinkles in the water. The blue of the lake was spent and faded under the bright, morning sun. On the other side—the east side—shadows of the green willows made the water black. Here the light of the sun was right on us. It burned my shoulder blades drawing the skin tight. My feet were still cool for there was water in the bottom of the boat. Only half of the boat showed above the lake water.

"Pull up your line. Didn't you feel something on it?" Papa said.

"No."

I pulled in the line. The hook was empty.

He laughed, drawing his stomach in so that his bottom ribs stuck out.

"He got away with it all right," he said.

His shirt was unbuttoned. He only wore it to protect his shoulders. His skin was brown with the sun.

"You didn't put your shrimp on right," he told me.

"Yes, I did. It's too hot for the fish to bite."

He reached in the pail. White and curled grass shrimp darted away from his fingers, but he caught a big one. I could see the hook go through its soft insides.

"Do you suppose he feels it?"

He looked up at me. His eyes had big brown pupils with little lines of black in them.

"No, it just tickles him the way I tickle you." And he tickled the place behind my knee. Our laughter sounded loud on the lake in the morning. My line moved in the water.

"I've got a bite."

Its scales were slimy. They were yellow and gold and green. The hook was caught in its red mouth, and I had to twist it

about to get the hook off. Its gills opened and closed frantically. I threw it in the pail.

"Let's go home, Papa."

"You going to leave all those fish in the lake, Sis?"

"Yes, it's hot."

I sat down at the front of the boat facing Papa. He bent his head. I saw his hair, black and curly, and his forehead and straight eyebrows, and the bone that made a hump in his nose. He held the oar tightly showing the blue veins on his arm. The boat barely disturbed the water. Between the lake and highway was a high bank that leveled off. On Saturday and Sunday there were a lot of cars going to town, but this was Tuesday. We had a corn patch next to our place, but mostly the ground was covered with weeds and little willow trees. Down next to the water were the reeds. It was around the edge of the lake that Papa caught the grass shrimps.

The shadows on the lake were almost all gone. Far up ahead only the green trees separated the grey of the lake with the clear, colorless sky. Our fishing pier looked stark and black against the light. As we came closer I could see the people sitting on the pier fishing. Dead branches of trees were buried under the water. The fish stayed around these.

We pulled the boat in on the oozing mud. There was a path through the reeds up to the store and the cabins. Between the reeds was lake water with tadpoles and shrimp. Rising above the reeds was the boardwalk leading to the fishing pier. It had been black from out on the lake, but from here it was rough and worn-grey.

Papa bent down to string the fish. I took off my straw hat and held it over my face. It smelled of summer's sweat, strong and sweet. The rim was wet. I put my hand on my hair. It was soft and damp. I put my hand on Papa's hair. His was curly where mine had been straight.

"Your hair is wet too," I said.

He got up with the fish.

"Come on."

He stepped through the mud, his long, bony feet leaving grooves for me to put my feet in. After the reeds came the brown leaves all over the black ground. The leaves fell from the willows that kept the sun out. We walked toward the brown-screened porch that was supported by long poles. Piles of fishing poles and stacks of wood were under the porch. We lived in the back of the house. In front was the store. Mama waited on the customers selling bottles of pop and beer and fish bait. On each side of the store were the cabins. Every morning the people came out with their eyes swollen from sleep, their clothes wrinkled from being packed. They stopped in the store to buy fish bait and rent a fishing pole. It was nearly noon now. Most of the people were out on the pier. The sun shone down on the quiet lake water. Over the lake it was white with sunlight. The trees on the other side seemed far away, and the green was faded. The light hurt.

The steps from the boardwalk to the back porch were old. The willows made deep shadows, the long-legged birds in the reeds made sudden, gawking sounds.

Papa stepped on a washtub to reach the boardwalk. He held up the fish. A woman walking from the pier stopped. She looked at the fish.

"Where did you get those fish?" she said.

The woman was short. Her legs were white, but her arms were red from the way she had been sitting in the sun. She had brown hair that was pulled away from her face and then came back again against her neck.

"In the lake," Papa said.

"I've been fishing in the lake from the pier and see what I caught."

She leaned over to him, showing the tiny perch in the pail. Her shirt moved and showed the white skin beyond the red sunburned part.

"I'd like to tell this Mr. Hibert about his fish."

"I'm Mr. Hibert."

"Oh. Well, you see how many fish I've caught."

He peered down into the pail again.

"You should have thrown those back." He shrugged his shoulders. "It's just been a bad day for the fish around the pier. Besides, there're too many people down there. They make a lot of noise. . . . You want to fish some more now? I know where we can find some fish."

"At the pier?" She looked at him, at his bare feet and the bony ankles jutting out.

"No. In the lake. I'll take you in my boat. I always guarantee fish at my fishing camp."

She smiled, spreading her lips wide over her teeth.

"O. K.," she said.

Papa gave me the fish, and they started off toward the boat. He went on fast before her, his blue shirt sticking to his back. She went behind him, her white legs walking slowly. Her long hair moved with the rhythm of her walk. They went through the reeds to the boat. Some of the yellow-legged birds were frightened by them. The birds flew away.

I took the fish and started up the boardwalk. When I looked back, the boat with the woman was out beyond the pier. Papa and the woman were sitting facing each other. There were no shadows on the river. Areas of dark blue and lighter blue were side by side in crazy, jagged shapes.

I opened the screen door fast to beat the flies into the store. Mama was sitting on a stool behind the counter. She was crocheting. No one else was in the store.

"Look what we caught."

I held up the fish the way Papa had held them up, the beautiful green and yellow and brown fish. Mama looked at them. Her grey eyes looked light in the darkness of the store.

"Where's Mr. Hibert?" she asked.

The ice box was right next to the Coca-Cola box. I went over and put the fish in carefully on the ice.

"He's gone out on the boat. If we sell these can I have the money?"

She did not look up from her crocheting.

"Did he go out alone?"

"No."

"Who did he go with?"

When she spoke her voice was high and shaky. It was like her eyebrows—they were low on both sides but went up in a point in the middle. She sang soprano in the church choir.

"I don't know exactly who he went with. One of the people staying in the cabins, I guess."

Cans were stacked thick on the shelves. Red paper with black letters were on the soup cans. Big white-papered cans had bowls of green peas painted on them. And down on the bottom shelves were sacks of sugar and potatoes. There were bottles of amber-colored vinegar and glass jars with small, round pickled peaches. They would taste like spice, and the peach would give way under teeth like soft flesh.

"He went with one of the women staying at the cabins?"

"I don't know," I said.

She got down from the stool. Her dress was pink, blue and white stripes. It was a sunback dress that showed her back—her back with its little red heat bumps. At night Papa would stand behind her rubbing lotion on her back for the bumps. The stripes were faded now. ("Stripes make you look slimmer," she had said when she bought it.) She wore an old brown belt to make it tight in the waist. She had lost weight since she bought the dress, but she was still heavy. She stood over me talking.

"Well, you do know whether it was a man or a woman, don't you?"

Little pink toenails showed through her straw sandals.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"It was a woman. What difference does that make?"

She picked up the pearls around her neck and twisted them around her finger. She looked out towards the door.

"Get some bologna and potatoes. We'll eat when he comes back."

I got the bologna and potatoes and took them back to the kitchen. The kitchen linoleum felt good to my feet after the oily store floor. I looked out the window. The lake was the same except there was no boat. There were people on the pier. They sat still like statues. Only the yellow-legged birds swooped in and out of the reeds hunting for fish.

Someone had come to the store. Mama's voice said something about the weather or the fish. I went up the stairs and over to the north bedroom until I did not hear her talking. The north bedroom was their bedroom. After they were up and working at the store, I would slip in. I liked to lie on Papa's side of the bed because his pillow smelled of his hair tonic. The room was cool. A big oak right outside kept the sunlight out. At night Mama sat on the edge of the bed in her corset pulling off her stockings. She would pull off one and sit there holding the stocking and looking far out the window. She rolled the other stocking off carefully and tucked both stockings in her shoes. When she took off her corset the pattern of deep grooves left by the corset seemed an inch deep. Finally she would put on either her blue or white nightgown. They were of batiste and very thin. There were garlands of pink roses all over them. She loved roses. She had a box full of artificial roses all colors. If she did not wear the roses, she wore her pearls. Papa did not have many clothes. Khaki pants and blue shirts he wore most of the time. His white linen was his best suit. When he wore it the white made his hair and eyes look darker. He wore it to mass on Sundays and to funerals. The women looked at him. I was proud to be walking with him. He had a straw hat to go with it. The straw hat had a red ribbon around it. The hat smelled just like his pillow. It all came from his hair tonic that he poured on trying to make his hair straight.

"Somebody might think I'm a damn nigger," he said.

The window curtain was blowing. It was raining to the north. It would be here soon. The wind was blowing up little waves with white breakers on the lake. People were running from the pier dragging their fishing poles and letting their fish pails swing on their arms. There were no boats on the lake.

Clouds came over the sun, and it started raining. The rain came hard on the lake, forcing the lake water to spout up; all over the lake it was like steam rising. There were sounds of the heavy rain on the roof and on the soft earth. I lay down on the bed. The ceiling was papered with old grey wallpaper. There was a yellow splotch on the corner where it rained through. Water seeped through the crack and the drop became bigger and bigger and it became heavier until it swayed with its own weight and then fell to the floor. Outside the wind had stopped. The rain was coming straight down.

When I woke up, the rain had stopped. In the corner of the ceiling there was another yellow spot. Outside the niggers had cut some poles and were trimming them. I could hear their jabbering. From the window I smelled the wet leaves and fish carcasses. The sun was shining again. The wet roof was steaming.

The boat came in, Papa got up and held the arm of the woman, helping her out of the boat. They walked side by side up to the boardwalk. I did not see any fish. They stopped a minute and said something and then went on. The screen door slammed. I walked down the dark hall down the steps to the kitchen. Mama was standing over the sink looking at the lake. It was red along the edges now, but the middle was blue. Papa sat at the table eating the bologna. I sat down next to him.

Mama said, "Were the fish biting?"

"Not much."

"It must have been wet out there in the rain," she said.

He leaned back in the chair chewing on the bologna. The bone in his temple went round and round even with his chewing. The niggers were deciding who should cut the poles, their voices shrill and loud.

"That woman must have felt awful out there in a boat in the rain."

"She didn't seem to mind," he said.

She turned around. Her face was red and her chin was trembling. I could not look at it. The potatoes in my plate were a grey color. They were soupy. The water ran over to the bologna gravy. My feet were flat on the floor. The floor was grainy with sand. I put my hands to my mouth. They smelled of fish.

"I worked in that store all morning long. People coming in all the time. Not once did I have a minute's rest. And where were you? In a boat with that woman. What do you think those people at the pier were thinking?"

She was standing over him, her eyes grey staring down at him, her hands flinging wildly about pointing at him, her hands on her hips, at her neck. Her skin was red clear back into her hair; I could see the skin through her thin hairline. He did not look at her. He had stopped chewing his food. His arms fell on the table, his long dirty fingers limp on the oilcloth. She shouted again, her voice tight and shrill. Saliva trickled from the corner of her mouth. She did not stop shouting to swallow. He sat there under it. The blue shirt was still open. His skin was dark and smooth. It glistened with sweat. She stopped, and I heard the little niggers. They were standing around the door trying to hide and listen. They began running when they saw me after them.

I chased them all the way down the graveled road. They kept looking back at me, their eye balls white, their thick, wet lips open. They screamed to each other, stepped on each other's heels trying to get across the road to their house.

"You damned little niggers."

They heard me shout and they ran faster, waving their arms about them.

When they went across the highway and through the gate to their yard, I stopped. The running had made me hot, I could feel my pulse beating in my neck, and my face burned. The screams of the niggers were gone now. Thick umbrella trees shaded our store and the yellow cabins far back at the end of

the graveled road. The store had a sign: "Hibert's Fishing Camp—Drink Coca-Cola." There was only the sound of the dry flies sounding first low and then louder and louder as though they were going to burst. A car went by. I started walking away from the store and cabins up the road where the car was going.

On the side with the lake there was a corn patch, the green corn growing from the broken black earth. The shining of the lake came through the willows. On the other side of the road were the houses with the big porches and long, white columns, their roofs of a red tin and the windows black in the sunlight.

Then no more houses, only the careful rows of new cane leaves. Not far off there was a yellow church. To be closer to the building made the walls whiter. It was the sunlight that had made them yellow. Its walls were like concrete. The door was open; this was St. Catherine's that only the niggers used now. Benches brown and plain were crowded in. The floor was dusty. My feet left black prints down the narrow aisle. Further away from the door it became darker, so the footprints disappeared. Only a little light came through the windows. A statue of the Madonna was on the altar. She held the Child next to her. She leaned her head towards the Child, not looking at Him, but at something else. The steps leading up to the altar were cold and damp like the plank seats in the boat, the wet black boat on the water. Papa had been there, his brown hands gently holding the fishing poles. Then I saw her grey eyes staring down at him. The eyes cursed him. But the grey eyes were only the faded light of the church windows. A room to the left of the altar was very dark. If the priest were here he would come from that room, his long robe trailing behind him. Our priest was a big, gentle man. His hands were fat, and they felt soft against my hair when he blessed me. With his low voice he repeated words from the Bible. Forgiveness and love were two burning lamps for me to take through the dark abyss of sin and sorrow. His voice would go on chanting in the stillness. I must help the poor, the sad. Like Papa, Papa sitting in the kitchen, the dirty kitchen smelling of fish.

It was almost night. The light from the naked bulb in the kitchen was beginning to show. The light streamed through the back door to the porch where Papa and I were. He was in the hammock. The hammock was still, but I could tell he was there by the outline of his body on the cloth. No one was at the pier. The yellow-legged birds had gone to their nests in the reeds. The frogs were just beginning to make noises. From across the lake came boogie-woogie music. The lake was purple, and it lay very still. Far down along the lake it was getting dark. The trees were beginning to become black forms. The church was down the river. It would be tomb-dark inside.

"Papa?"

He grunted.

"Guess where I went today?"

The hammock swung slightly.

"Where?"

"To that old church—St. Catherine's. It's beautiful inside, so cool and dark. . . . Papa, you mustn't worry about anything, I'll . . ."

"Mr. Hibert!"

It was Mama calling him from upstairs.

"Come fix my back for me."

He got up from the hammock and went through the kitchen, up the stairs, down the hall. He would go into their room; then he would rub her back standing behind her the way I had seen them before.

The insects kept buzzing and hitting against the screen where the light was. Papa did not come down. The lake became darker. All the trees lost their form. Mosquitoes started humming, so I went over to the hammock and lay down, drawing the cover over me. I did not want to go upstairs.

JEAN FARLEY:

Sharp and Smooth

I

The sea shifts and turns in its dune-smooth skin
to list in toward shore for a final tapered heaping
before it is toppled and rolled out thin.

A yolk-fed turtle trundles across the sand
and slides from the edge of a beach
scalloped over and over in white and tan.

Above on a tilting ledge of wind
a sea hawk planes and waits
for the turtle to reach a depth to dive in.

II

Sand and water heave from sea to land,
settle and mix or split themselves on tips
to rake all the shells into sand.

I walk up the thick beach stumbling,
stretch out and settle along the heat.
Within my skin the water's retch and fall fumble

for a shell to scrape into sand.
I sleep by walking a see-saw up to its balance,
and wake at the tip that grates on land.

Out in an Hour

This is the day for a celebration
at the big red rock where troops surrendered.
I may get down for some great oration
in the square that I've watched them extending
from the sixteenth to the seventeenth street.
I'll leave this four-bar and seven-year window wasted
the way you bite off a brown piece of apple meat
and blow it out fast, untasted.

Fifty Year Old Sick Woman

Tweezers at my ear go mincing
after cotton, careful and pick-thin
with now and then a prick like an old wrong word.
The branch that scrapes my window in the wind
slept last summer an intricate dream
of dove-tailed leaves and leaf-winged birds
bantering in their warm room of green.
Then winter pinched off all but one grey sparrow.
Once that after-twitch of words
caused views of myself as victim-hero
escaped from Turks who cut tongues off at the root,
or a vague envy of the deaf-mute.
But then I slept my dreams in color
and was more intricate than a sickness heard
now in the tweezers that click at the bird.

Energy Colors

A sharp-winged swallow folded in toward shore
and wheeled the reeds to swing out reaping
an insect inch above the water floor.
And this might be—flames in a field
of corn almost all dried for heaping
after the slivers of brush fire had peeled
from weeds to slice into stalks at the knee
—the yellows, reds and greens of energy.

"One bright day in the middle of the night
two dead men got up to fight.
Back to back they faced each other,
drew their swords and shot each other."
And this might be—the rattle-tailed,
trapped-mouse movements of wrists at night,
circulating on grey nail-threads
which first have tangled through the head.

A bird would think wings worse than walking
if all of the winds were dead,
and wrists will be strung on the twisting string
when the head can glean no yellow, green or red.

Landscape

Anything with backbone will have its habitat
listed briefly by a flashbulb picture:
'Bait thief caught in the act.'
(After one wide-eyed look he sneaks away,
back through brush to his own sleeping fur.)

Every action has its landscape,
but I am running wild
in an area as smooth as a map
where all the rocks and growths are glazed on thin.
Though I dart on many crooked miles,
and blood beats out my skin,
all space is taken in by one scaled inch.
I came once to the upper edge of a sea,
was the single lump upon that polar scene,
but over the side was only gravity
and some long fall of fragile shale.
Then I felt a listing underfoot,
so turned and left that shining rail.

Perhaps this is all some involuted
lobe of brain.
Put a landscape on it
and it is still the same:

I came down from the upper floor of the house,
crossed the lawn to climb this smooth green hill,
and soon I'll go back to the three-tiered house
where sometimes the houle of an owl will slide
on the crisping sound of insect shrills,
or sometimes an oil-black snake will coil
around a scaling sycamore hide.
For this is the way I sleep and wake:
probing a spiral in-ward, then rim-ward
with one end an owl, the other a snake.
The coils between them are loose and blurred,
neither knotted, pointed, notched nor roweled,
but the way that I mean to take
is wound up, fastened—and set aside now.

GEORGE PAUL:

The Road

The road started at the town and cut through the town and ran precisely wide and plumb-line straight—paradoxically straight, you might say, for a place where I haven't seen one thin frame wall raised with the struts where they ought to be—until it hit the second road. The second road angled back at sixty degrees and went down to the water and the pier. The pier was empty now, a wide and vast oiled black macadam affair set high on concrete pilings thrust deep into the coral bedrock of the miniature bay, the water of the bay outlining in soft, depthless blues the slow curves of the peninsular finger of land at the thumbnail of which the town sat. It was a funny thing, the way the first road by-passed the pier and hit the second road that angled back.

Twenty years ago two Englishmen had come to the town. They were fresh out of engineering school and the quiet bone-dragging drain of the heat hadn't begun to sweeten their energy. The Englishmen walked through the town, along the narrow footpaths that wound from one house on wooden posts to another and they plotted a wide road that would run from here, where they marked an X on the survey plan, to there, and they marked another X on the survey plan.

They completed the first road all right—the fruit company was satisfied—and at the end of it they built the warehouse. They were about to begin on the second when the Mayor came into their office one day, and pointed a fat finger at the construction map.

"Boats here," the Mayor said simply.

The Englishmen just looked at the old man. He was wearing a dirty white shirt with all the buttons missing and his whiskers were gravy-stained. One of them said, "Go home, fat man, and tell your wife to cook more plantains."

The Indian who was interpreting was afraid to insult the Mayor. He made some remark about the Mayor's elegant stature. The Mayor smiled, showing a mouth full of black spaces and said, "boats here," once more. Then the Englishmen smiled and the tall one who sweat only under his arms pointed at the square and said, "boats there."

The next day there were no laborers down at job's end. Soon after, a new square was drawn on the map. A line drawn through it, perpendicular to the first road, would have bisected the first road exactly at its center but the warehouse had been built so they began the second road there, angling it back to meet the new location of the pier.

As long as the fruit company remained there was no need to carve a direct trail through the jungle from the first road to the pier. But when the blight blew in and mottled the stems the company let the plantation rot. They moved out of the town, leaving too many bars and shops and took all but two of the oldest trucks. When the next supply boat tied on to the pier the crates had to be hauled up on backs. So they cut a small path with machetes. The Indians are handy with the big knives. It was something to watch the way the short, squat, bow-legged Indians ripped through the jungle. As time went on the trail got bigger. No one bothered to cut any more—it just got bigger.

Five years after the fruit company left, the trail had become a second road, and the second road, just a trail grown over with vines and palmettos and a few wild banana trees, leaves tattered and dusty during the dry season and sleek after the rains. In fact, when the carpenter had the truck running sometimes he'd drive it right down to the pier—the clearance along the trail was that high. The ground was always moist and had the right amount of spring to it because the sun never got a chance to bake it hard as it did the straight road lying flat in the thick air. More often, though, the carpenter would not drive along the trail but would urge the truck up and down the straight road until he tired of doing it. He seemed to find some pleasure in it.

One time I can remember passing by his house and seeing him lay the curbstone for the walk he was making. In all the time I have been here, I have never seen anyone making a walk, much less edging a curbstone out of one. The carpenter had strings run along the sides of the path and he was going very slowly, making the ends of each stone line up exactly—something else I'd never seen, anyone being exact, besides the engineers, I mean. So I walked over and said, "What are you doing, José?"

He didn't stop working. "Making a road."

"Then it will be a little road, a caminecito," I said.

"Nevertheless it will be a road, a straight road, and it will have a curb."

I let it go at that, but later on, after the path was done, I saw him at the edge of the first road. He was kneeling and sighting along the curbstones.

"That is a road," I remarked. "It looks like the path that you made."

"This one is better," he said.

"It is bigger."

"And very much more straight." That was all he said.

I didn't see the carpenter again until it came time for Father Walsh to leave. The Father was too religious, I think. True he was a priest; yet there is a limit to drawing things out. He probably did it to impress the Indians. Next to the old Mayor, Father Walsh was the fattest man in the town. He received a great deal of canned goods that the mission sent down from Boston and to look at him you'd think he did nothing but write to Boston for more canned goods. But he really kept busy doing good work. He was a charitable man and the children liked him.

When it came time for him to leave, we were waiting for him at the junction of the trail and the first road. The carpenter and Father Walsh were sitting in the cab of the truck and the Father's belongings, packed in cartons, were piled in the back.

There was a lot of ceremony, Father Walsh made a long speech, first in Spanish and then in Indian, and he blessed the gathering. Finally, when it was all over, they began to present him with the gifts. That took quite a while, he made a fuss over each person and kissed their babies if they had any babies. The carpenter was last. He went to the back of the truck and pulled out a large wooden chest which he had covered with a reed mat. The chest was made of mahogany and polished. The workmanship of it set everyone talking. There were no designs but the cross on top. It was a beautiful job and must have taken the carpenter a long time to make. He had used dove-tail joints and if it weren't for the grain of the wood it would have been impossible to tell where the tails joined. The edges were sharp. I believe you could have broken skin by running a finger across one—and I never saw anything as straight.

"This took longer to construct than even the path," the Father said.

One woman came over and felt the top of it and then all the women had to feel the top or the sides. That took more time. When the women were done Father Walsh looked at the carpenter and said, "I have decided to place my belongings in the chest and take the first road and then the second road to the pier."

Everybody wondered what made the Father decide to do that. The trail began here; it was shorter and easier going. But that's the way it was. When he was ready, Father Walsh put the chest on his shoulder and struggled down the first road. What a sight he made—like a round ball trying to balance a block as it rolls. I can still remember the sweat exploding onto his face when he went in to the sunlight.

We stood in the center of the road and watched them go. After awhile, I said to the carpenter, "I wonder why he did that."

"He is showing me his gratitude," the carpenter said. He had streaks from the tears on his cheeks.

I thought it was all very foolish. As Father Walsh took the angle of the second road and stumbled out of sight I said to the carpenter, "That is a strange way to show one's gratitude."

I think the carpenter must feel that it was foolish, too. He smiles about it now.

MARY FITTON:

Notes from a Student Journal

1 November

When I was fifteen I started a diary; it was all a fake, the story of the golden-haired princess, put down for publication how will this look? In a blue ink Palmer method hand, ruled pages. Finally I sickened and threw it away; I should have kept it to see what the princess dreamed of captive in her corner room with the apple-blossom wall paper. I still can't be honest; these are my friends y'know, and I've been told once or twice to cut the self-directed irony.

Well for dinner tonight we had liver and onions and spinach home-made brown bread mashed potatoes and gravy milk canned pears coffee and new brands of cigarettes. I gave W. my second helping of spinach when he came in late; he wore a red sweater with cables and a V neck. He and his girl have white skin. She wants kicks. We can meet in girl-talk, but being a bitch is harder than you'd think. I cried on W's shoulder Saturday night, reversal of roles, but still not satisfying.

B. remembers cartoons. I like to laugh at the table,—what's the difference between a wit and a raconteur? Wit: a neat turn of speech by which disconnected ideas are unexpectedly associated. Wit is poetry; story-telling is prose, or ritual, as our student of anthropology would have it. A. tells stories and it's not so much the content as the way: the audience, the time, the place, the lighting and puffing of cigarettes, the conditioned response, the repeats and pauses, the laughs and groans together. Wit is a quick intellectual spark which illuminates an incongruity. Story is a glowing ember which flickers over the faces around it.

Our nature boys didn't stay to laugh. I like to snatch the heavy tray first to thwart their self-indulgent servility, but one of them rushed the coffee in before I cleaned my plate. He told me once that coffee is his only vice. He smells offensively clean; I suspect him of fading his shirts with Clorox before wearing them. My roommate and I decided this summer that someone should seduce him as a duty to the community, but who wants to?

One of the girls called B. a peasant and said he must be so much cruder now because he works on the farm. I don't mind the obscenities, but they're dull and overworked; it's even getting hard to be insulting these days. It was the same way in the army; I made a list once of army slang, I got a kick out of "brown nose," but most of it was dull. The Wacs didn't swear much—I did learn to say Jesus without flinching—in fact, most of them were greater victims of middle class morality than the college girls I've known. I had on my shirt with the fifth army patch; I pretended to be sick of the questions, but maybe I welcome the chance to say sure I was in how do you think I got so tough?

Two boys from the next table came over for hot coffee. E. has a beard. If I were a man I'd grow a beard sometime; then, if I didn't like it I could definitely *not* have a beard. It's fun to have the possibility for choice and decision. It's like having a baby for a woman; what a shame not to have one because it's a golden experience life offers. E. wore a sweater with ski-motif, T. his maroon flannel shirt. J. said that always means he just took a shower, otherwise he doesn't wear it. I like maroon on men, I think it's sexy—also yellow.

O. plays quiet observer most of the time. People like that make me feel nouveau-riche crude and eager. But hell, I got tired of spectator sports.

N. doesn't like recording personal observations. I do I like very much recording personal observations. What else does the artist do but record the hits and shocks he gets from the outside world? Anyway, is a journal written for oneself, maybe to be used later?

5 November

Getting thin is an exciting process because it is consuming energy and it is feeding on yourself on your own fat and very physically using your own stored energy and so it is doubly exciting because you are using and using up. And then there is a certain pride in it feeding on yourself this way, it is almost creative and you feel like working I do. Also of course you can look down at yourself and see more bones and so you feel powerful to change the shape of your body this way and so it does make you feel powerful.

I like to write. It is like a lover. You do not want to see him all the day but then when you see him it rushes all the day together and finally you can do something with all the day. Maybe you write only half an hour a day but all day and every day you are waiting around to write that half hour a day, Gertrude Stein said that.

Raskolnikov in the movie last night reminded me of J. because he looked like him, also because he made things mysterious and dark and terrorizing and full of conscience. You do Make things this way, J. doesn't understand, he thinks they Are. And all this thinking can do is wind around inside yourself and wind blacker and more twisted.

Gertrude Stein makes men writers look a little ridiculous, makes Pound so shouting, I think it is because she is a woman and needn't fight so but can accept her material as it comes to her and not try to carve it out. It is true a woman is more easily than a man and he must always try and make. Didn't Gertrude Stein and Pound ever meet—I wonder what happened. Because they are both strong and talking/teaching (but he is more teaching than she), but they are not strong the same way, as if she had strong bones foundation just there but he strong muscles developed after exertion.

L. came in the infirmary tonight to see me and said well if you would lose some weight you wouldn't have hurt your foot. He tells me I don't work and all I do is dance and flirt and want sympathy, I don't know why I should care except that he seems to make an effort to find my softest spot and poke there. L. is very concerned with the spending of his money and is pleased because I repay small debts promptly. He likes people to be trustworthy he says, I don't know what that means. He bought a portable file at home to carry his important papers around in order. I should think it would be a burden, a portable metal big square file cries for weighty papers. But M. uses leather-bound notebooks to write in, perhaps containers do not matter.

6 November

The planes of the dining hall please me, the divisions of the windows with their large simple panes of glass. The even rows of mail boxes, dividing space, containing space. The white bulletin board edged with two white-painted boards. The grained fitted wing boards, the vertical siding of the white boards at the kitchen end, white and regular. Straight square white columns smooth surfaced braced near the ceiling with boards which form triangles. Black and white textured stripes over the black piano.

After practicing the piano, I watched the Kafka rehearsal. J. dark and brooding and fierce in a smeary gray dressing gown—the father. Like Dostoyevsky. Intense dark terror. Strong in acting, strong in drink, what is a when is a man?

The difference between experiencing and remembering and realizing and setting down. I experience, I drown in it. I remember and it may be longing nostalgic sentimental panting sighing. I realize the witchness of the witch. Then words—something else, because I can't just *know*, I have to deal with it in words. The hot and cold combination of experience/words; it frees my blood to flow and feed and race with itself.

Would you rather I'd say: I'll remember you in my will—or—
Would you rather I'd say: I'll remember you in my dreams.

x x x

Would you rather be a soft-boiled egg—or—
Would you rather be a hard-boiled egg?

7 November

D. H. Lawrence. "—a man doesn't want, doesn't ask for love from his wife, but for strength, strength, strength. To fight, to fight, to fight, and to fight again. And one needs courage and strength and weapons. And the stupid woman keeps on saying love, love, love, and writes of love. To the devil with love! Give me strength, battle-strength, weapon-strength, fighting-strength, give me this, you woman!"

I say Hallelujah brother but I don't believe you. Mewling and puking is more like it; is every man's fondest dream to make love to his mother?

As W. says this is getting to be a lousy with me. But weakness is softness is liberal is progressive is Lady Bountiful is scrap to Japan and China Relief. If the other person is strong you can take and give both, and it mounts each time and increases capacity for either function. Because babies just take and mothers just give and fathers earn the money. If others are weak you must constantly excuse them and so excuse yourself, or else only sneer and preen. It's like a man always says, well if you wanted the vote don't expect me to stand on a street car.

A poem is a thing. It is like a piece of music in that you must read it again each time to hear what it is—not enough to recall, to remember the subject and development, the tone and the what not. I call a bad poem mood music, dinner music, music by Muzak. And humming a snatch from the B Minor Mass is a pleasing occupation, it's probably not music.

I read an article today on the popular notion of the artist as neurotic. He may have his Freudian dreams and quirks—to hell with it; he is healthy because and when he has the power to shape and control his material. The artist is healthy when he works. The expressions of a schizoid may have intensity and interest; they are not art. And neither are artistic persons artists; you can smoke Regents or dung, sleep with your cook or marry your mistress, caress leather-bound editions or leave wet rings on a mystery, have muscles or pimples—fa niente.

For reading class today the schlemiels didn't do much preparation. This is bad for me, it makes me think any dew of mine is a lot of sweat. I vomit on talent, work is the thing, honest labor yea man, and not only my writing but my thought must be strong. The writer can't relax totally ever. It is like a dance class; a release it not a slackening, it is a new position, a stretch-out, easy but held, and ready to tense again. Also voice. My singing teacher tells me first you prepare yourself your whole body then you sing; it is more than air escaping from a flat tire. It's fine for me to see the connections between these things, I think they are valid, they all involve the total body, awareness, readiness, mind/muscle tone and use of available energy. These exhortations to myself, the results of the moral-colored American upbringing, the gentle glow of good intentions and right feelings.

Is there a danger in writing a journal, the joy in flow of words like wine?

8 November

W. C. Williams. "He was a great MAN. Reading his letters, it is a river that brings sweet water to us. THIS is a moral source not reckoned with, peculiarly sensitive and daring in its close embrace of native things. His sensitive mind. For everything his fine sense, blossoming, thriving, opening, reviving—not shutting out—was tuned. He speaks of his struggles with their language, its peculiar beauties, "*je ne sais quoi d'énergique*," he cited its tempo, the form of its genius with gusto, with admiration, with generosity. Already the flower is turning up its petals. It is *this* to be moral: to be *positive*, to be peculiar, to be sure, generous, brave—TO MARRY, to *touch*—to give because one HAS, not because one has nothing. And to give to him who HAS, who will join, who will make, who will fertilize, who will be like you yourself: to create, to hybridize, to crosspollenize,—not to sterilize, to draw back, to fear, to dry up, to rot. It is the sun. In Rasles one feels THE INDIAN emerging from

within the pod of his isolation from eastern understanding, he is released AN INDIAN. He exists, he is—it is an AFFIRMATION, it is alive. Père Rasles, often suffering the tortures of the damned as a result of an early accident—fracture of both thighs, badly mended—lived with his village—alone, absorbed in them, LOST in them, swallowed, a hard yeast—"

In the American Grain

Père Rasles was a Jesuit priest who lived with a tribe of Indians in the Maine woods. He lived with the Indians as one lives with men, not above nor below, but with through and of. While the English divines of New England resented and burned and cut off the ears of the Indians and thought the French Should do likewise. We the product of both but essentially the English—in code and in action, afraid to touch a man except with a sterilized needle.

When you're sick you're dependent for any outside supplies and it's deprivation deposition degradation. For you can't be mean to your supplier, he the giver the bringer of all—power, power to give, to withhold. You are forced into position of receiver—not even taker—pleased smiling ungrasping and grateful for all.

9 November

Money necessarily defines the human relationship I have with my parents. My father wrote me: we like your school, we think you should finish the year but we are not sure you should continue after that, we can talk all this over at Christmas. I do not wish to talk all this over at Christmas. I do not like talking over; it is meaningless and it is just that: Over: above and apart. I particularly dislike these little talks with my parents; the talks are so loaded and I am apt to cry and crying seems a refutation of my position: But I am not a child anymore. I decide. What do they decide? I decided to be a camp counselor the summer after high school and I worked for my Senior Lifesaving. I earned my own spending money at Radcliffe so I could buy books instead of dresses. I quit school; I joined the Wacs and I spent my own bloody money to come home weekends and buy my own war bonds. I decided to work in New York one summer and I lived on my pay. I decided to go to Europe; it was papa who paid that time, so I presented my plan, didn't state it. I got my own job in Washington. I applied for Black Mountain, the GI Bill pays.

Live your own lives. You suckled your children but don't expect return in money or blood.

When they say what do you intend to do with your life, I say I intend to live. What they mean is when do you intend to get a steady paying job or maybe a husband with same. I don't worry about money, a girl can always walk the streets. No, it's the mixture they want; not only a job, not only a steady job, not only a good steady job, but nice contacts with interesting people, a dash of good will and good works a normal feminine interest in clothes . . .

I'm wasting my time in resentment. I don't have to "prove" myself that way.

10 November

How can I write a hymn to joy? Not to God, not to the beautiful organs of man (Whitman), not to bounteous bosomed nature, not to the blue steel machine, not to the cold stars and the orange sun, not to my mother father brother child friend, not to glorious myself.

Must I only destroy? Destroy the towered banks, destroy the layered cities, destroy the factory belt girdling the world, destroy the bricked-up endowments of the schools, destroy the clapholds.

What channel will carry my river of joy?

11 November

I do not blame you.

And I do not blame myself.

I do not hide to eat secretly at my heart.
But when the wind blows damp
Down from the quiet house
And red-eye shines white under the star-patterned sky,
I would like to knock on the door of your house.

12 November

Remorse guilt and a beastly hangover next day are part of the fixed conditions for an evening of gaiety. It edges the evening finely, gives it point and punch. You can begin with warm pride that very night to swell with pre-knowledge of the next day's misery. It gives desperado to the whole affair; if I'm going to suffer anyway, by God I'll suffer for a Hell of a time. It gives small-boy swagger for doing the forbidden deed. What a performance, what a rich ritual of sin and expiation. And self-created too. Next day groan and tell the world boy did I hang one on, oh I was Really hung over. Suffer bloatedly in pride.

13 November

Petty, mean, involved with my own convolutions. I want to set down the large movements of the outside world. After they seep through my senses they change. My eye photographs badly, my ear records imperfectly, the whorls of my finger tips slide over harshness and roughen smoothness. Locked in the foul cell of my own mind, the victim of my own defecation.

Maybe this journal is becoming only a manifestation of my masochism. I remember so strongly a girl's dance this summer to *Ash Wednesday*, Part III, her saying: Lord, I am not *worthy* Lord I am not worthy. Saying pulled her head up to look up, her mouth down, her nose tight, her cheeks in. She said it strong — personal/strong — because how else can you say that strong. We heard it as strong and maybe were embarrassed. Saints and holy martyrs beat themselves with rods, but I cannot allow myself that delicious indulgence. Saying and knowing and sighing I am worthless cannot save from the pit. Stein says a saint is a person who does nothing. No narrow path for us to white trite truth marked out by spiked weeks of falsehood and fallen corpses.

I end up by feeling false even in my feeling here: self-exploitation; what else can the writer do? Or perhaps just that the action of energy is the cure for depression.

JAMES WRIGHT:

The Lover

Dear Anna Connell, with the long gray hair
In waves, and the warm face eighty-five years old,
Could have been found near houses anywhere
Miles around Warnock, walking through the cold
To town to get the mail
In white December, or in the warmish days
Of April, or in the sun, or in the hail,
The same pale Anna, plain with the gray eyes.

And on the day her husband died last winter,
His gaze being frozen like a swollen well,
Miller the squire snickered of him: a plainer
Man he knew never, unworthy even of hell.
But days before he faded,

I heard him in delirium from the stair:
'Look at her hair.

The dark brown coils, that was what I meant!
The brownness in the hair. My God. The hair.'

14 November

Some people are nuances, some are crashes and I like both. I like to have subtle dealings with the nuances, smiles over heads, unfinished phrases and glances, quick shifts and moods, sly businesses. I like to fight with the crashes, hit and hurt, glow and destroy, turn away and back quick. But the most delicious is when a nuance crashes and a crash nuances. My joy spreads like sirup inside to see it and react with and against. Smile softly at the crashes and provoke the nuances to desperate acts.

Before dinner N. and I went for a row on the lake in a boat the fishermen left. The boat is flat bottomed, wooden, with three seats, one square end, one pointed. J. says it's a skiff, I don't know. The paddle is homemade and rough, with the corners not rounded off. We had to wade through the muck to push the boat off shore, then I climbed in to the far seat and N. shoved off standing like a gondolier. He had to sit down to make progress, but still it was quite Italian and we sang Santa Lucia and O Sole Mio, as who wouldn't. We got through the iron rings outlining the children's pool and out into the deep water. The lake seems bigger from the center and the water more like a body of water, not merely a reflector and a supporter of ducks. The lights of the dining hall, the study building and brown cottage shone around us: made the community a circle of warmth and light, made the lake deep dark, wet and cool in the middle.

The water was black, with places of light on the north side of the waves. The mountains weren't yet silhouettes, still had soft depth. A cloud moved above the Mitchell range and a star shone there. In the center N. stopped paddling, and we and the boat and the lake and the sky were quiet and I was full with love for N. and the boat and the water; I could be warm because the water was cool, solid and deep under us. Water, first principle. Why does it satisfy deep? I must know why, is it an idea of water, can ideas satisfy? Must it be physical, correspondence of rhythms: outside nature and inside body, one-to-one? Is it flow of water and flow of time; is it filling the lake bowl and filling space? Is it water as solvent, water as buoyant, water as drink, water as mirror and glass? The half-assed scientist can't tell me, but I can consult his books for properties and actions of water as fluid and compound.

N. rowed back to the shore in a zig-zag and we laughed; laughing can be happy too, a substitute for the voice of a night-ingle caught in your throat.

Sonnet: To Look Up Heaven

Hop O' My Thumb, the tiny fairy boy,
Dwelt in a dragon universe of huge
Fabulous pipesmoke clouds and ceiling sky
Arching a table plain's horizon bulge.
He stabbed a gray mouse with a needle's point;
And found in a fly's eyes incredible hell;
Paradise was the dapple-freckled, faint
Pearly interior of a smooth snail shell.

But I, surveying hordes of sundered stars
Strung over bridges groined by granite piers,
See no such consolation over me;
But creep along the scooped-out shell of night,
And, fearing gods at such ungodly height,
Look past Andromeda to vacuity.

PATRICIA HUNSINGER:

Maturation

Kate listened to the thin whistle of the radiator a long time before she realized she was awake. It was the only sound she could hear—thin, sweet, slowly rising in key. She pulled the blankets over her head and wiggled towards the bottom of the bed. The warmth and darkness pleased her. She drew up her knees, then straightened them, so that the humped blankets would settle gradually and she would feel the air circulating over her body. She did this several times.

When she was small this warm world under the covers had been her own secret possession where she used to make up stories about herself, and the things she would do and be when she grew up. Now she was grown up. It was childish to hide beneath the covers as she used to do. Besides there was no more air to breathe.

She pushed the blankets to her waist, turned on her side towards the windows and looked out at a segment of grey sky and branches. A lone tendril of ivy crawled diagonally across the screen. She thought about the grey sky. Maybe it was too early for the sun. Maybe the sun wouldn't come up at all. Then it would be like yesterday, damp and depressing from morning until night. It was awful to walk through the rain to classes, books bulging under your raincoat, getting wet just the same. She thought of the yellow-lighted classrooms and the professor's voice suspended in time, while the rain rattled on the windowpanes. She pulled the covers up to her chin.

Thelma was sleeping soundly in the other bed. Kate's eyes followed the outline of her figure as she lay in the sunken bed, curled like a fetus, so much like a child. Kate watched closely to see if she were breathing. She held her own breath as she waited, and sighed as she detected the gentle rise and fall of the flowered quilt on Thelma's bed.

In another hour the alarm would ring. Kate was provoked at waking up an hour ahead of schedule. Today was Friday. She calculated the hours she had slept since the beginning of the week—six, five, eight one exceptional night, and six last night. A total of twenty-five, in four days, or five including today. If she didn't change her ways she would ruin her health. That's what her mother would say. Mother would no doubt be horrified when she came home. Kate visualized her red-rimmed eyes and the dark circles around them. According to a drug-store scale she had lost four pounds. She stroked her cheek to feel if it were hollowed. It was strange that she wasn't tired now, waking up an hour before she had to. Instead she felt unusually alert. It must be nervous energy. Kate wondered how far one could go on nervous energy.

Almost an hour before the alarm would ring and then the day would begin. Perhaps this unplanned-for hour was not bad. She could do with it as she would and that made it precious. If she went back to sleep she would lose it. There was no time in the day to do with as she wanted. Today she had three classes and a lab. She must remember to see Dr. Jensen at ten about speaking to the Sociology club. She hoped he wouldn't object to talking about the future of juvenile delinquents in America. Tonight she would go to the concert with Warren. Above all she must find time to write a letter home. Mother would call up again if she didn't. It was cruel of her not to write. She pictured her mother hopefully running to the mailbox, twice a day, and finding no letter from her only daughter, and her father coming home from work at night and asking if there was any word, and his disappointment. It was wicked of her, but they didn't realize that she was working from morning until night and there was no time to write. They always said she didn't know what real work was. They should have learned by this time that if there were anything radically wrong they would hear about it. Thelma would write.

And sometime today she must work on her term paper. It was due in another week. Last night she thought she would arrange her notes, never dreaming that the meeting would turn

out the way it did. What sort of person would object to organizing a group to discuss world problems? They must have been isolationists. Sally had managed the situation beautifully. She stood before the meeting, relaxed, at ease, and told them point by point the need for such discussion. When those two boys had risen and in ignorance said that they thought students could learn about world problems perfectly well by reading the newspapers and listening to the radio, Kate had been ready to get up and tell them a few things right back, such as the fact that the whole trouble with the world today was the apathy and selfishness of people too interested in themselves to think of anything but their own trivial problems and they were perfect examples. She wished she had done it. She had planned to do it. She even had her hand raised, but then Anne Porter got up and started talking about something else and after that it seemed rather foolish to begin arguing all over again. It was all politics. She had never known that people could have such personal spite. Just because Sally was a girl and somebody important, they were out to smash anything she did or wanted.

Kate thought about what she had learned after the meeting when they went to Sally's room. They sat around and talked about the meeting, and politics, and people, eating chocolate cookies and dried apricots until after twelve. Talking like that was more important than writing a paper on the evils of capital punishment. When she got back to her room she still didn't feel like working. She wanted to think about what had been said. Thelma was already sleeping. She had left a desk light burning.

Thelma always left a light on if she went to bed before Kate came in. Thelma liked to sleep. She still lay, curled up, on one side. The quilt came up to the tip of her ear. Her hair was screwed in pin curls all over her head. Sleeping had caused the ends to stick out, hornlike, at angles. Her breathing became audible. Kate listened to the wheezing intake and outtake of air, rhythmically recurring. She cleared her throat loudly. Thelma straightened one leg and rolled over on her stomach. She tucked a fist under her chin and remained motionless. Kate listened and heard nothing except the sound of rain in the tree outside the window. It was definitely going to be another rainy day.

The room was very gloomy. The tree outside the window made it gloomy, even on a sunny day. It was dirty too. A slip that she had stopped wearing two days ago was hanging on the bedpost. Her desk was heaped with books and papers and all the furniture was filmy with dust. Her mother would be horrified. Her mother kept an immaculate house. She was very much concerned with the duties of a housekeeper. Thelma and she must appoint some date for a general cleaning. The drapes and spreads needed cleaning. In the middle of her own spread was a blue ink blotch, produced by a leaking pen. Kate remembered when the spreads were new. The saleslady had tried to convince them that the flowered pattern was much to be preferred, but Thelma and she had both agreed that the red and green plaid was more striking as well as ninety-eight cents cheaper. They had planned each detail of their room the summer before they came to college. Thelma found an old armchair in her attic with a rat hole in the seat. They stuffed the hole with cotton batting and covered the chair with green chintz. They bought two red wastepaper baskets and some green paper lampshades. The room had seemed beautiful their freshman year. Kate was tired of it now. Three years in a red and green room made her ache for a change. So much that had seemed wonderful that first year was now no longer important. She knew so little then about herself or the world. She had learned about people from living with them and observing them. People like Sally who knew what they wanted and could stand up and tell other people about it. She knew what was important now. She was definitely growing up. Her mother didn't realize it, but Mother would always treat her like a child, her father too. She would always be their darling.

The alarm clock rang. Her hour was at an end. Kate waited to see what Thelma would do. They kept the clock on a table away from the beds so that they would have to get up to turn it off. Thelma raised up on her elbows shaking her head. Throw-

ing off her blankets she got out of bed and lurched clumsily toward the table, fumbling for the clock. The clamor stopped, to be echoed in the room next door. She rubbed her eyes with the back of her hand and pronounced a distorted "good morning" in the middle of a yawn. Kate could see no point in replying when the whole world was being drenched outside. Thelma fell face downwards on her bed with a screeching of springs. She reacted this way to waking up every morning.

"Go back to sleep and you won't wake up," Kate warned.

Thelma mumbled in her pillow, "Just a few more minutes." She lay with her arms dangling over the side of the bed, groaning as if she were in pain.

"Thelma, if you go back to sleep, it's your own risk." Kate decided this was sufficient.

Thelma lifted her head and squinted her eyes. "Would you look at this miserable weather?"

"I have."

"I want to stay in bed. I can think of nothing better than staying in bed this whole long day."

"Go ahead. You've still got a cut in psychology, haven't you?"

"I know, but I shouldn't. I hate to cut Mr. Leighton's class. I always run right over him later in the day. And he always smiles and raises one eyebrow and says, 'Good afternoon, Miss Richards, I hope you are feeling better.' Then I feel so big. But gee, I'd love to cut today. Talk me into it, Kate."

"What you do with your cuts is entirely up to you." Thelma rolled over on her back. That was the trouble with Thelma. She could never make her own decisions. She had to learn to think for herself. Kate put her hand to her mouth to hold in a yawn. The alarm had rung ten minutes ago. "I'm getting up," she said, "I've been awake for an hour."

"How awful! Couldn't you sleep?"

"No. I needed to do some thinking."

"Sleep would do you a lot more good than thinking. I have to have at least eight hours or I'm no good at all."

"We're not the same people, you know."

Thelma didn't answer. Kate swept back the blankets and got out of bed. She took some clean underwear out of her bureau drawer, draped a green towel over her arm and started out of the door.

"Where are you going?" asked Thelma.

"To the bathroom. Do you want to come?"

For a minute Thelma didn't answer. "What's bothering you?"

"Nothing."

Thelma grunted and wrapped her arms around her pillow, hugging it tightly. She stared up at the ceiling, her mouth open, her tongue moistening her lips. She was still in that position when Kate returned. Neither said a word as Kate put on a skirt and blouse.

When the silence became too obvious, Kate asked, "Are you going to do something?"

"I am thinking upon important subjects," said Thelma, still staring at the ceiling.

"Why don't you think about getting up?"

"That is one of the subjects under consideration."

"You'll be late for breakfast."

"Uhhmmm. I wonder what they'll have. Are you going?"

"Yes."

"I guess I'll go too."

Kate was angry with herself. She was behaving like a child. She should not permit herself to be so irritated by trivialities. This morning was no different from other mornings in the past three years. Thelma was only being herself. She had not changed.

"We've got ten minutes," she said. Kate made her bed. She placed her stuffed elephant over the large ink blotch in the middle of the green and red plaid spread.

She hung the slip which had been around the bedpost for two days in the closet. Then after transferring her coat and three notebooks from the green chintz chair to the bed, she sat down to leaf through a news magazine. But she didn't feel like reading

about last week's news. Thelma came out of her closet carrying a navy blue crepe dress, holding it high in the air. She touched it lightly with her fingertips, caressing the material. "What do you think of this for Saturday night?" she asked. "Dick has seen it millions of times but . . ."

Kate broke in, "Look, we've got less than ten minutes to get to breakfast before they stop serving."

"I'm sorry. I'll only be a second."

Thelma rushed across the room to the closet, the blue crepe dress billowing behind her. Kate could hear the muffled noises of her activities. She heard a cry of pain, "Damn that hanger. I bet I'm bleeding." The closet door burst open, slamming against a desk. Thelma came out, her arms twisted behind her back, fumbling with blouse buttons.

"I'll just be one more minute, Kate."

She removed the pins from her hair, and the curls sprang out in all directions. She picked up her hair brush, bent at the waist and began stroking downwards.

Panting slightly, she said, "Dick and I came to Sally's meeting last night. We saw you on the other side of the room. It wasn't very successful, was it?"

"I think it was. We're going to have the first meeting next week and discuss Chinese-American relationships."

"Who decided that?"

"A group of us after the meeting."

Thelma's face was red from the rushing blood. She stood erect and began to comb her hair smooth. "I don't think people will come. And if they do I doubt if they say anything."

Kate threw the magazine on the floor. "Damn it, you're like all the rest of them. You condemn something before it's even had a chance to show what it can do."

"I was simply giving you an opinion. I didn't condemn anything. As a matter of fact, I think Sally has a very good idea, and a person with her aggressiveness is just the one to put it over."

"What do you mean, aggressiveness?"

"Just what you always say. She has a lot of initiative and push. She's got her finger in every pie on campus." Thelma had stopped combing her hair and was standing by the bureau doing nothing.

"You don't like her very well," Kate said.

"Not very much as a person. Of course I have a lot of respect for the things she does."

"As a person you don't even know her."

"I've met her a number of times, and I found that quite sufficient."

"Is that all the basis you have for forming your opinion?"

"Kate, I simply don't like the girl. Is that a crime?"

"Of course not. The crime is that you can say you don't like her when you don't even know her."

"I think she's bossy, selfish and rude. That's my opinion of her. If I'm treading on sacred ground, please forgive me."

"I think you're merely being stupid."

A bell rang in the hall outside. It was too late for breakfast. Thelma and Kate looked at each other, saying nothing. Then Thelma walked over and threw herself on the bed. Kate picked up the newsmagazine from the floor.

She could hear the voices of chattering girls in the hall, on their way to class. Through the window she could see more girls in raincoats and rubber boots, shielding themselves with umbrellas. Two boys stood on the porch of a fraternity house across the street. Thelma was very stupid, Kate thought. She was like a child. She hadn't grown up. She didn't know that you had to do something with yourself, be something. Life demanded it. They had been roommates almost three years. It would be difficult to change now. But it was necessary to face facts. They didn't belong together and the last year was much too important to be spoiled with stupid bickerings. Kate wondered how she would talk to Thelma about breaking up. She would never understand.

JANE HART:

The Game

The little pick-up truck turned off the highway onto the road. The road was dry and the truck left spirals of dust billowing in the air. Cotton fields lay brown and withered on either side of the road. Looking through the smeared window by the front seat, Gertrude Snelley watched a thin layer of dust settle on the brown leaves of the cotton plants. She watched it dully and in silence. She didn't want dust on the plants. They were too bare and dry already, and the little bolls looked wretched under the hot sun. It would be hard this year. Jud had counted on the cotton. She turned and looked across at him with sympathy and pity in her pale blue eyes. She saw gray hair under the brown felt hat and reached out to touch it. It used to be so black, she thought, when we were first married.

He shook her hand off testily. "How can I drive with you doin' that-a-way?"

She sighed a little. "You're forty-two now, ain't you, Jud?"

"Now, you know good'n well I am. Don't you remember? You let the young'uns buy me a new pipe for my birthday."

"Oh, yes . . ." She remembered now. They had all clamored to give him something and she had given them money enough to buy him a new pipe, a nice one that would last a long time.

She turned and looked through the back window to see if the children were all right. Unconsciously, she counted them—seven in back, and little David in front. She wanted to tell them not to stand up without holding on. She wanted to tell Sarah to watch Jewel and Robert. But the window wouldn't open and she had already told them once anyhow. She looked down at David sitting between her and Jud. His hair was so blonde and curly. He must have taken after her. Her hair used to be curly, and it was still light. All the rest of the children except Jewel had Jud's brown eyes and dark hair.

Then as they hit a bump, there were sudden squeals of fear and delight from the back.

"You better slow down, Jud. This road's awful rough."

He didn't answer but he did slow down. She turned back to the window. She could see that he was angry. Everything she said annoyed him. She had made him mad at her in the beginning by saying she didn't want to go to Lloyd's house today. She still didn't want to go. "Lloyd didn't really mean for us to come." She had told Jud that this morning. "Lloyd don't want us there, Jud. He just asked us out of politeness. We don't have no bizness over there a-tall when he's got comp'ny, and 'specially them being from Atlanta. You know how some city folks are."

But Jud had declared he would go by himself. He had told Lloyd he would come, and he wasn't going to let him down, even on such a small thing as that. And the children had begged to go play with the two little girls from Atlanta. So now they were on their way. Gertrude sighed heavily. She dreaded meeting them and talking with them. She always felt so stiff and awkward, and sometimes just a little ashamed of her clothes. The country was no place for finery. She looked down at her plain brown oxfords and thought wistfully of the pages and pages of high heels in the catalogue. Fancy shoes wouldn't last long out here, she thought, a little satisfied. She dared to wear her black ones only on very special occasions. But, she thought, her dress was nothing to be ashamed of. It was new; she had finished it only a week ago. It was a pink cotton print with embroidery on the sleeves and collar. And her hat wasn't too old—she had bought it Easter before last, when David was just six months old. All the same, she could not quell the uncertainty or the fresh wave of doubt that surged over her as they turned up the long driveway. She sighed again. Jud looked around.

"What in the world is the matter with you, Gertrude?"

"I just wisht we wouldn't go," she said, knowing there was no use in trying to explain.

He snorted, "There's no sense in you bein' that-a-way. You oughter want to go visitin'."

"When we gon' be there, Ma?" David broke in. She was glad David interrupted. Now she wouldn't have to argue with Jud.

"We're almost there now," she said, lifting David to the window. "Look, David, see all the cows over yonder?"

They went by the pasture and by another cotton field. There was the little white house on top of the hill; and, yes, there were people on the front porch. Jud turned sharply to the left and drove right into the front yard, where he came to a sudden stop.

A tall gray-haired man came to the edge of the porch and called out something to them. That was Lloyd; there was his wife, Rosa, and that must be the Mitchells, Gertrude thought, when she saw a man and woman sitting in the swing. Two little girls in blue jeans and barefooted came running around the side of the house and stopped abruptly when they saw the truck.

The children scrambled out and ran up to the house, only to stop and stare shyly at the two girls. Sarah remained behind to walk gracefully up to the porch. She was fifteen now, and had to act her age. She would never go barefooted now as the other children did. Gertrude watched her and thought how pretty she would be. Then Gertrude got out of the truck, and leading David, she walked slowly up the path with Jud. She was so tired! Her body was starved for rest and was never satisfied. She looked up and saw the tall, slim woman standing on the porch. Gertrude remembered when she, too, had been slim and lithe; but that was before hard work and child-bearing had warped her body. Now her figure was bent almost into an arc with stooping shoulders, a rounded back, and hips slanting forward. But there was no use in thinking how she looked now.

She heard Lloyd's good-natured laugh as he tried to point out the children to the Mitchells. "That's Sarah," he said, "and this little blonde is Jewel. The smallest one is David—but so help me I can't tell the rest of them apart. What's your name, little 'un?" he cried as he seized one, with mock ferocity.

"Robert!" the little boy squealed in terrified delight, and struggled to get away. Then he ran to Jud and hiding behind him, he peered out laughing at Lloyd.

"And here's Ma and Pa," Lloyd said as Gertrude and Jud came up the steps. That was just like Lloyd, Gertrude thought, always laughing and putting on a show.

"This is Gertrude and Jud Snelley," he said, "and this is my cousin, Herman Mitchell, and his wife, Alice Mitchell. Those two hiding behind the porch are Jenette and Linette. They're twins."

Gertrude shook hands with the Mitchells, and murmured a faint "How do you do?" It sounded so awkward. Not knowing what to do with her hands, she picked up David. He squalled to get down and play with the dog. She put him down and stood there with her arms hanging stiffly by her sides.

"How have y'all been gettin' along?" Lloyd began, but without giving them time to answer, he turned, "Wait a minute. I'll get some more chairs so y'all won't have to sit on the floor."

He brought the chairs. They were straight-backed and straw-bottomed, and uncomfortable. The children had overcome their shyness and gone off to play. The men began to talk about crops. Herman started it, "Well, how's your cotton this year?"

"Not so good," Jud said. "Weevils got most of it."

"Well, it's that way all in these parts. Looked bad in Alabama too—at least the part we drove through last week," Lloyd added.

"Do you mean boll weevils really can ruin cotton?" Mrs. Mitchell asked.

Herman laughed, "You'll have to explain, Lloyd. She's not an old country hick like me."

That shows it, Gertrude thought. That shows they think all people that live in the country are country hicks.

"Well, how can a little bug ruin a whole cotton crop?" Mrs. Mitchell went on.

"Do you know what cotton looks like?" Lloyd asked.

"Yes, I've seen it growing," she said.

Herman laughed again, "You ought to let her pick a couple of rows before we leave."

"Well," Lloyd went on, "them little weevils just bore a hole and climb into the boll. It dries up and just don't open. And then when it's picked sometimes there'll be one little lock left."

"What are locks?" she said.

Herman laughed again, "I told you she didn't know anything about the country."

"Well, I'm trying to learn," she said.

She doesn't know very much, Gertrude thought. But when the talk turned to politics Mrs. Mitchell knew as much as any of the men. Rosa was silent except when she turned to Gertrude to ask how the children were and if Robert had gotten over his cold. Most of the time she and Rosa just sat and listened. Gertrude watched Mrs. Mitchell as she talked. Her hair was blonde and curled smoothly under. Her hands were the most beautiful of all, and she used them in speaking as if she knew how beautiful they were. They were gracefully narrow and smooth; the nails were long and polished a dark red. Gertrude looked down at her own hands and tried to hide them under each other. The fingers were stiff and the tiny gold band only accentuated the thickness of them. She felt rough calloused places and knots on the palms. Finally she decided the right was the uglier and covered it with the left. Then she remembered her shoes and pushed her feet back under the chair.

How tiresome it was to try to pay attention! She watched a few white clouds float slowly across the blue sky. It would be nice, she thought, to lie on one of those clouds and let the gentle wind blow you all the time and never have to get up. It would be so soft. But now the clouds were gone. She looked around quickly. Followed by Jud and Mr. Mitchell, Lloyd was going down the steps. She looked at Jud. He was saying something about tractors. Oh, they must be going to see Lloyd's new tractor. She wished they wouldn't go. Now she would have to talk and she didn't know how she should begin.

Mrs. Mitchell turned to her. "You certainly do have some fine children, Mrs. Snelley."

"Why, thank you," Gertrude began a little awkwardly. "They're nice, I mean good about helpin' around home. 'Course me and Jud's always loved children anyway. Your twins are pretty little girls. How old are they?"

"They're twelve."

"You don't have any boys?"

"No, just Jenette and Linette."

"Well, I guess you don't have much trouble keeping them up, do you?"

"Oh, they're worse than boys could ever be—running around like Indians and trying to act like boys. They plague the maid to death."

"Well, they're just at that age," Rosa said in her soft way.

Gertrude wondered how rich the Mitchells were. They looked like rich people and they had a maid.

The women talked a long time. "Mrs. Mitchell is really a very nice woman," Gertrude thought, "and she's got a lot of sense, too." Just the same she wished Mrs. Mitchell hadn't mentioned Ted. Of course, she said it in a nice way. She had heard so much about him from Herman and she wondered if Rosa had any pictures. Rosa brought the album and showed the pictures of Ted and the ones he had taken. Gertrude wished Rosa wouldn't talk about him. Ted, her only child, had been killed during the war, but she still talked as if he were only gone on a trip, and would be back soon.

"Here's a picture Ted made of a frog. He said it took him nearly an hour to get one just right. Lloyd used to say Ted could take a picture of anything that moved if he could make it stand still just a minute. And 'course that's what he did in the Air Corps when the war came."

"Yes," Mrs. Mitchell said, "Herman used to write me about him. He said he didn't even recognize him when he first saw him—he had grown so. They were in the same squadron two years."

"Herman was just in four years, wasn't he?" Rosa asked. "Ted was in five years—almost to the end of the war."

Her voice didn't change but she looked across the yard and down the road. She couldn't really expect him to come back, Gertrude thought, startled at the searching expression in Rosa's eyes. The Government sent word that he was missing and then that he was killed in action. Gertrude was glad none of her sons was old enough, and Jud had not been taken. She always felt lost when he was gone.

Tired from running, the children came gambling up to the porch, and threw themselves down on the floor. Sarah sat and watched Mrs. Mitchell shyly and with admiration.

"What grade are y'all in?" Jewel asked the twins.

"Seventh, but we'll be in the eighth soon," Jenette said importantly.

"I'm going to take French next year," Linette added.

"You mean talkin' like French people?" Sarah asked. "Oh, that's what I want to do someday. Can you say anything in French?"

"Well, no, not yet. I can't take it until next semester."

"When does your school start?" Geraldine asked. "Do y'all have to go to school now?"

"Why yes, don't you?"

"No, 'course not in cotton pickin' time."

"Y'all get out of school just to pick cotton?" Jenette asked, amazed. "Do you have to pick cotton out in the field?"

"Yes, everybody has to, 'cept people that live in town like y'all do."

Gertrude was glad when Jewel interrupted, "Let's play somethin'. Some kinda game. I'm tired of just sittin' around."

The twins brought one of their games; they all crowded around it and began to play, after a few loud explanations.

"They sure do like to play games," Mrs. Mitchell laughed. It was fun to watch them. Gertrude knew the children didn't get a chance to play often. She leaned over to watch more closely. Maybe she could get them a game like it for Christmas. They played with dice, throwing them and then moving blocks the corresponding number of squares on a board. They were arguing, laughing, and shouting.

"Lord-ee, Jewel! Look what you threw," Geraldine screamed.

One of the twins snickered, and leaned over to whisper to the other one. With a shock, Gertrude thought they were laughing at her children. She watched them. They were whispering and giggling together. Sure enough, they were making fun of her children. They didn't have the training their mother has, Gertrude thought bitterly. Mrs. Mitchell would at least have waited until they were gone. Suddenly Gertrude felt that she couldn't stay here a moment longer. She got up quickly.

"We really better go. I didn't know it was gettin' so late. James, go fetch your papa. Sarah, bring David. You'll have to stop playin' now."

"Oh, Ma, let's don't go yet. We

out, "Why are y'all leavin' so early? Stay a little bit longer."

Jud replied, "Well, I wisht we could, Lloyd. I think Gertrude wants to git home early. I reckon we better be goin'."

Oh, why did he have to mention her, Gertrude thought. He could have made some excuse.

They rode back down the driveway. Jud fussed after they left. She knew he would but there was no use trying to explain.

RICHARD GIBSON: One Cold Winter Night

All day he had huddled by the stove while the wind rattled the windowpanes. It might have been warm . . . had there been a fire in the stove. To have a fire, one must have fuel, and in a city fuel costs money. Unfortunately, he had no money nor hope of any.

It happened that he did have a friend not too many blocks away. But to walk any distance on such a night, he needed a warm overcoat; he had only a thin leather jacket. Struggling a moment between the fear of the cold night and the thought of his friend's warm apartment where, perhaps, he might even get something to eat, he went out into that bitter cold winter night.

His back bent, he hurried enviously past block after block of warm, cheerful windows. It was snowing again; a thin, slippery layer of snow lay on the pavement: his thin-soled shoes were of little comfort.

To reach his friend's house, he had to cross a small square; it lay before him deserted and barren. Into it and onward along the dimly lit path, he walked rapidly. Bent over as he was, he had a very good view of the ground directly before him. On the path, he noticed something that had been partially covered by the snow. He gave it a kick, a kick which revealed the object to be a purse. A purse which seemed at his quick glance to contain quite a bit of money.

When he felt he was at a safe distance, he went into an alley and hurriedly counted his treasure. Numb and shivering, but wealthy enough to put aside all thought of his friend, he marched with great deliberateness toward a lurid red neon sign, which was the welcome sign of a clothing store.

"Ah," said the clerk as he entered, "don't say a word, I see exactly what you need." The clerk turned and went into a stockroom. He reappeared with three packages; out of the largest, he took an overcoat, a heavy black overcoat; from the next, a bowler hat; and, from the smallest, a pair of sharply-pointed shoes. "We have been keeping these especially for someone like you," said the clerk with a reassuring smile. Before he knew what was happening, the coat was on his back, the hat on his head, the shoes on his feet, the purse—alas!—tightly clenched in the clerk's hands. The clerk smiled benevolently and sighed: "There!" and with that, he hurriedly shoved his customer out the door.

He walked slowly, almost obliviously, over the ice and snow into that stormy night. No wind chilled him, no flake of snow slipped into those shoes. He walked sensuously and slowly in his new-found warmth. He decided once more to visit his friend and so he again came to the square. A tremor of fear ran through his body after he had taken a few steps. Suppose the loser should be there, wandering futilely about the dark square, in search of the lost purse, suppose the loser should have seen him pick up the purse, suppose the loser recognized him and should now accost him and take away the shoes, the coat, and the bowler hat? He found it necessary to remind himself that no one had seen him, that the loser was far away, perhaps still unaware of the loss.

He walked on into the white-blanketed square. It was not deserted now; two well-dressed old gentlemen sat on a bench,

They turned back into the road; now they were facing north. Gertrude stared blankly at the fields of cotton. How useless and miserable they looked! Why did she feel so queer? She had felt relief when the truck moved, but now she just felt sick. But then she lifted her eyes to the north, where the distant mountains lay like a faint blue smear at the edge of the sky. She and Jud and all of them were going home.

motionless except for a slight turning of their eyes over their newspapers, which they were able to read by the aid of a small kerosene torch held in the left hand. He paid little attention to them.

He thought it was because he was so unused to wearing a proper coat that he felt so warm, so weighted down. He thought this as he recrossed the spot where he had found the purse. His shoes, he thought, were a little too tight for the same reason. And the bowler hat . . . it too was rather uncomfortable. But of course this was because he was so unused to such luxury. Yet, as he went on, he became more uncomfortable. Soon he was actually in pain. And this made him increase his step; but as he did, the width of the square seemed to grow proportionately. Before long he found himself running. A terrible thought occurred to him: perhaps his coat was on fire; he felt as though he were roasting.

The coat was like a furnace which, while not consuming itself, consumes all things put into it. There was, however, no sign of smoke or flame. He decided, nevertheless, to take it off and make a thorough inspection. But he noticed that the old gentlemen were still watching him, and thought it would be wise not to do such an absurd thing unless he had to. So he continued to suffer. Then it occurred to him that the old men were holding torches; the wind could have easily blown a spark onto his coat. He ran back to where they were sitting: "My coat," he shouted, "is it on fire?" The old men looked him over sternly. Finally one of them asked: "What say?" He repeated his question more loudly, and received the same answer. He cursed them and ran toward the park guard's shack.

The guard was inside, bent over an oil stove, attempting in vain to warm himself. When the guard heard someone at the door, he peeped out of the window to see who it was. "Sorry," said the guard through the glass, "I don't dare open the door; it's much too cold in here as it is." "But," he screamed back at the park guard, "I'm on fire, I'm burning up!" The guard grunted and went back to his oil stove.

No one realized. No one wanted to help him, so he must help himself. He determined to remove his coat regardless of what others might think. He could not unbutton it though, nor could he remove the shoes nor the bowler hat. He swore and cursed loudly with no effect; he ripped and tore, but it was of no use. He ran blindly, maddened by pain. He tripped and fell into the snow; he tried to bury himself in what he thought to be its coolness, yet each flake for him was a hot coal. Mercifully, unconsciousness ended his pain.

The hat and the coat and the shoes burst into a bright orange flame. They made a merry blaze such as one seldom sees, except perhaps on Christmas eve when one has a huge log in one's fireplace. His flesh fried like good bacon—and smelled only a little stronger. The intensity of the fire grew and soon all had turned to ashes—all except the hat and the coat and the shoes. They smoldered awhile, but then became as new. From behind a tree stepped the clerk from the clothing store and lifted them carefully from the ground, put them back into their boxes and hurried briskly away with them, leaving behind only a meager pile of ashes. It stopped snowing, the wind became a gentle breeze, a few stars shone, and the moon came from behind the clouds. The well-dressed old gentlemen put down their newspapers, blew out their kerosene torches, nodded their heads thoughtfully, and shook hands; and, in his shack, the park

LLOYD PARKS:

Ophelia

Far more a garland than the garland-bier
That buoys her billowed hair,
Her skin more lily, lips more rose and myrrh
Than all a garden's ware,
She floats on the black stream like a dead naiad,
By sodden folds revealed
Exquisitely as calm Praxiteles carved
A muse in linen veiled.
Sarcophagus in cold ablution,
Sinking to colder dissolution.

There is no shepherd, hunter, Hamlet here
To hear her waning lauds,
Only reeds and fronds of willow proffer
Succour to failing hands.
The shepherd sleeps, the hunter winds his horn,
While Hamlet plots a plot,
Ophelia to her watery lot is borne
By lily roots to rot.
The lover ponders his ghostly quarrel
As love sinks loveless out the world.

Innocence that lost the way in this wood
In search of unguent blooms,
Unwary reached too high and fell in the flood
To lodge in liquid rooms—
In quick constructions, self-refreshing tombs
That steal away the dyes
Of the mad transient, wear to skeletal ruins
The walls of those lustrous eyes.
And only minnows for benisons,
And crabs to say her orisons.

A slight breeze sways the catafalque above
The nun in her clear cloister,
Beneath those boughs as fatal as loveless love
Clung to, that broke and lost her;
Except unwitting hand or braid releasing
Occasional violet,
Quiet the lady lies lightly displacing
The deadly element.
While rushes writhe in seeming bereavement
And willows pose in mock lament.

Lithe Helen did so much for the old men
And spurred the young to death;
Swarth Cleo gave her breast to feed a worm
To end her lusty breath.
But Greece had none so hapless, fair and good,
Nor Egypt half so pure—
They are beside the fair Ophelia flawed,
Prodigious paramours.
For this is Beauty's paradigm
Sired by genius on riper time.

A Knight's Tale

1.

A knight to a lady pleads his ruined estate:
I bring this stately rose and a few choice jokes
To laugh you into love with gay debate,
To prove by a symbol love is spiny hoax.

You sail so white a sail on the sea of pride,
But still this aimless, endless course you chart
On the candid tide,
Guided alone by pure reflection,
Must sometime pale to imperfection,
When you will veer to any wind
And tacking drive
Your bark to berth in the first palm-fringed port.
That abundant bosom weighing to water's imminence
Your silken argosy, argues against such continence.

So take this rose and press it to your breast
Until the blood shall flow;
Till its thorns touch your heart.
For then its gall will mingle in your veins
But through your dominating sweetness change
To elixir, a river charged with ripe old wines,
To rouse forgotten thirst.
Source where your lips most bow,
I will drink and you with drunkenness be blest.

2.

Seizing the rose, she smote the cotton heart
Emblazoning his coat. She too could jest.
But it fell like flint, and passion soared in smoke,
Involving warning, showing her the test
Had failed. Prefaced, proudly she spoke her part:

Pale huntress I, I ride to find that wood
Where true hearts live, that bleed for hearts of blood.
I have no love for a patch
Blandly stitched with incendiary verse—
Love undone by a scratch.
To some romantic maid you should rehearse
This sullen vow that rimes as dull as wood.

3.

The knight turned to his pretty fictive towers,
His tumbled courts,
To graceless waste usurping florid bowers;
Aside he cursed:

Oh you are but a monumental ember;
Consumed, though crystal and hard and whole as ice.
Your charms all ash on Dian's altar;
Cold remains of a living sacrifice!

And thought if she were less adept at logic,
He more at music, he would have won the day.
The mean must be of course a golden lyric.
And spurred his horse toward Venus' shrine to pray
For marvellous signs, for victory in the fray;
Rode off to gird his heart for new polemic.

RUTH SMITH:

The Storm

"Say, did you hear? Ed Perry's bull got killed last night. No-o-o-o, not poachers. Fell down that well he was diggin' in the field just b'low the house. I dunno, I guess it did hit him pretty hard. Um-m, heard it from Tom Stallings when I stopped by. Ay-ah they do look as though they're goin' to mount up. Everybody along the road's watchin' over there to the east. Sure do hope it comes down this way, my tomatoes are the size of eggs and the peas are no bigger than birdshot."

Cy shook his head, raised his arm, then pulled it back in the car. The brake snapped off and the car rolled down the slight hill. I stood watching the car as it gathered speed, bouncing from rock to rut. When I heard the car banging over the first plank bridge I thought: Cy's going to need a new car if he doesn't stop gunning over those bridges. I looked at the mail. Nothing but a bill. Lord, it was never anything but a bill or a catalogue of some kind. They send you a catalogue so you'll buy something, then send you a bill and then another catalogue. It had better damn well rain or the bill will never get paid. The weather was just like it was that last year up in the Aroostock. I walked down the road until I was clear of the trees. The sky was clear right overhead but down east, somewhere near the Point, there was a tower of grey clouds, their edges outlined in gold. Then what Cy said about Ed Perry's bull came back to me. Too bad. But he should have covered the hole up or fenced it 'round if he was going to put the bull in there. Damn fool! Well, that's his only piece of bad luck while I've known him. And it wasn't even bad luck. Damn fool!

I showed Mary the bill when I went in for dinner. She didn't say anything, just put the bread on the table and sat down. It was a quiet meal. The only things said were, "Sam, what's wrong?" and, "I'm just tired. Hot down in the field." But I was thinking about Ed and that fancy bull of his.

Howie Cook and his boys came down after dinner. We worked like a team of horses all afternoon trying to get all the hay I had mowed in before the storm broke. One of Howie's boys went on ahead with their tractor and rake, breaking the windrows into bunches, then Howie and I came along to pitch them up on the hay rack to his other boy who was building the loads. No one did much talking down in the field and we spent the time it took us to take the loads up to the barn resting. When we finally were ready to pick up the last load, the only thing you could hear was the steady hum of the tractor and the clashing and jingling of the rake as it was raised and lowered; or a deep grunt from Howie or me when we got our fork under a sizeable bunch. I kept looking around my shoulder to see if any more clouds had come up and how close they were getting. They seemed to have gotten taller and darker and filled up more of the sky every time I looked.

The tractor had stopped and Howie's boy had come back to help us load the rest of the hay. By this time I was humming a little as we moved off down the field and I had to smile when I remembered how mad I had been at Howie two weeks earlier. He had come down and asked if I'd let him have the hay on the upper fields if he and his boys helped me get mine in. The way he talked it sounded as if he was doing me a favor, as if I'd never get all my hay in without some help and I'd never need all the hay in my fields, so he'd take it off my hands. Two weeks ago. That was around the time that Ed Perry and his wife had come down for a visit. We'd left the women to talk in the house while we walked around the fields and along our boundary to check the markers. He sure had gotten under my skin with that high and mighty air of his. Sure it was hard on a man starting out new. Yes, and it was too bad about those bad seasons up in the Aroostock. Everybody was hit pretty hard. He heard about it from a cousin. He hoped that things would go right down here. Of course, it would take time, I wasn't set up like the rest. Howie Cook had just built himself a new barn, and

Presner had just added fifty acres to his original lot; and himself, well, he'd just bought a blooded bull. Going to raise Milking-Shorthorns. Good for both milk and beef, you know. Ought to come down and have a look at him some time. Fine looking animal. They were all like that. Each of them jealously watching the next in order that no one would get ahead of them. And all of them looking down their noses at me. Well, Ed Perry had nothing to crow about now.

"Well, Sam, four more bunches and we're finished," Howie said, jabbing his fork into the hay and then putting all his weight on it until all but ten inches of the handle was covered. He took off his old blue and white striped engineer's cap and hung it on the handle, then turned to look toward the east, rubbing his forearm across his forehead to clear the sweat away, then snapping his arm down to shake the wet from the hair on his arm.

"'Bout time for it, eh, Sam? You can wade halfway across the pond and timber's so dry you can hear a pine cone drop a mile off." I turned to look. The east was black, lighted only by occasional flashes of lightning. A wind coming from that direction had roughed up the water of the lake and there were waves breaking over the rocks that had broken away from the ends of the islands.

"Let's get the rest of this up into the barn, Howie. Then we can sit and watch the storm move this way. Feel sort of sorry for those folks I left up in Aroostock, looks like another dry summer for them. They should have moved out like we did. Five bad seasons are too much for any man."

The barn was hot and dusty, with no breeze to give relief as there had been in the field. Every time the fox-fork dropped a load of hay in the loft a cloud of dust billowed up, then was pulled along the rays of the sun and out of the small windows.

Howie had stayed on the rack to set the fork in the hay and to signal me when to stop and start the tractor. His two boys were up in the loft placing the hay. From my place in the tractor, just outside the barn door, I could see Howie's form bend as he plunged the fork into the hay, then jerk sharply as he drove it even further home, down into the load of hay. As he stepped back from the fork I could see his arm raise and hear his voice calling, "Take it away," at the same time. I backed the tractor slowly away from the barn. The slack rope would drag along the floor of the barn, following the tractor, picking up stray wisps of hay, then suddenly the rope would snap taut and all the hay that had stuck to it would drop off. As the tractor drew the rope steadily backward a section of the hay in the rack would tear loose and rise slowly into the air, small chunks falling back into the rack or trailing the twisting fork-full into the shadows of the loft. Many times the release rope would be fouled by the hay and I'd have to let the tractor roll slowly forward so that Howie, cussing softly and carefully, could free it. This had happened five times before we had the rack completely unloaded. The boys climbed down from the loft slowly; their shirts were wet through with small pieces of hay clinging to them, and more hay and hay seed were stuck to the backs of their necks and hands. Howie and I left them with their backs bowed, pulling their shirts over their heads.

"I must be spoiled, Sam. That damn fox-fork! You know me and the boys put

"Those are fine boys, Howie. Guess they're a big help to you."
"Yeah, they're fine boys. Little lazy, but they'll get over that. Too bad you have no boy around to help you. You could use someone 'round here. Awful lot to be done first few years."

I didn't answer him, just opened my beer, and put it up to my mouth fast to catch the foam. Mary and I had lost our boy when he was no more than a year. Then after that came the time when I was making money too fast to think of much else. Things were going along fine. Mary had new things and the farm looked like a city folk's place. Then the weather turned bad year after year. I should have known I'd hit a streak of bad luck.

The wind was coming in savage gusts now. The loose hay in the fields was being lifted into the air and blown toward the orchard and a haze of dust lay above the dry road.

"God, it's hot!" Howie said, changing his position. "It should be rainin' over here in about fifteen minutes, the storm's over Round Pond or Walpole now. Hope the boys don't stay down there too long. I have to be gettin' home. The missus worries. Lightnin' and all, ya know."

Things are going to be fine, I thought. Mary can have some new things again, and I can get some things fixed up. The roof could stand some shingles, and maybe a new cow-shed. I was right about moving down here, it's another bad year up in Aroostock. Look at it blow! This keeps up and there'll be enough hay around the apple trees so I won't need to bank them.

The boys had come back and Mary had given them some lemonade. They had one of Mary's movie magazines, and were talking and laughing in their newly masculine voices at the half-way nude women. Quite a party. Everyone real relaxed and happy. The two boys, because they didn't know any better, and Howie and I, because some rain was finally going to fall. Howie and I just sat there watching the rain moving our way, taking swallows of beer, and half listening to the boys discuss one of the pictures the way they would the merits and demerits of an animal.

"Suppose Cy told you about Ed's bull?" Howie said. He knew Cy had. Cy always delivered the gossip with the mail. But something had happened to the storm; it just seemed to stop over Walpole. And I guess he thought a little talk would hurry it up.

"Ay-ah. Said it'd fallen in that well he'd started. Told Ed he'd better fence it 'round or cover it when he said he was goin' to let the blame animal loose in there."

"Damn shame. That was a mighty costly animal. Ed had big plans too. He was goin' to start a herd of Milkin'-Shorthorns. Said they was good for both milk and meat, he couldn't miss. He's done right well in five years. Has a new barn and got the house fixed up. Well, he'll make out all right. He and his boys work hard."

"I know the man he bought the bull from, has a place down outside of Kennebec. His herd ain't too good. Sorta thin and their backs don't look too good. I always thought Ed's bull looked weak through the back and hind quarters. If he paid more'n a thousand dollars he got the bad end of a bargain."

We hadn't been looking at each other all this time, just talking out ahead of us and watching the clouds. We were both getting kind of riled too, because the cloud seemed to stop. What wind remained finally died and the storm anchored somewhere over New Bristol. It hadn't moved ten miles in a quarter of an hour. We could see the lightning flashing from cloud to cloud and the gray streaks of rain coming down, no more than three miles away.

"Christ!" Howie said and got up. The boys looked up at him and got to their feet, leaving the magazine on the ground. "Take that magazine in to Mrs. Carter so's we can get goin'. We got milkin' to do. Well, Sam, it looks like you should of stayed up in Aroostock, or you goin' to pull out and move down to Bath and do some carpentry?"

I hardly heard him. I just sat watching the clouds flattening out and breaking apart. When I heard his car start off I got up and milked the cows, then went in to supper. Mary had my plate all ready for me. We sat there side by side at the kitchen table, looking out to the old chicken house, I'd never got around to moving, watching the firs getting darker. Then Mary said, "Where did the storm stop? Over New Bristol?" I just nodded. The cat came over, jumped up on the window sill, and sat there blinking back at us.

"I had a letter from Leah Elder today. They're all fine up there. She says Bill's doing fine. They miss us. Bill sent a note along, do you want to read it now?"

I said I wasn't hungry, just tired; so I thought I'd go to bed. I'd read the letter in the morning.

CAROL FENCKEN:

The Green Child

The child loves like a flower
Like a single yellow poppy
Unpossessed and unpossessing.

God pastes blue paper behind the sky
And keeps eighty million chinamen
From falling off the world . . .
The child loves such a man as God.

Outside in the wind and a wide coat
He feels like a flag.

Autumn

After the sweaty shirts, and people stricken
by the low leaning heat, resisting change,
the mediator comes to temper, reckon
with that extravagance. There is a strange

peace in the invulnerable, sterile stubble
embossed against the field: dehydrated,
relieved of potency. Self-conscious rabble,
the nervous leaves, now bronze, once green and red,

fall; and the earth is purged with ashes and amber;
a searing wind strips raw; the soft, slow mist
is salve. So Fall dismembers to re-member,
and the blood flows between wrist and wrist.

CHARLES T. DAVIS:

Bequest

The August sun shone down with quiet intensity on the small, ill-kept Negro cemetery, located, oddly enough, in the middle of a cotton field. It was partially protected by a sagging, rusty, iron fence, sections of which were almost hidden by weeds. Even the cotton bushes around it appeared to droop in the protracted and pitiless afternoon heat. In one corner of this arid burial ground, two Negroes, one middle-aged and the other young, were in the last stages of digging a grave. Incongruously, they wore Sunday clothes. Their white shirts stuck to their backs, and their coats were hung on one corner of the iron fence. The elder, Morris Beverly, worked willingly, though with the clumsiness of his years; the actions of his son Jack, however, denoted more sullenness than industry. Lackadaisically, the strapping, twenty-five year old Negro smoothed the dirt around the edges of the hole. Suddenly Morris stopped spading, leaned on his shovel, and remarked reproachfully, "Ef it hadn' been fuh you, boy, we coulda got dis done dis mawnin'. You done made us miss de service, runnin' off like dat, an' gittin' drunk. Don'cha know better'n to git drunk *befo'* a fun'ral?"

Jack answered, unremorsefully, "Ef you hadn' got us into dis grave-diggin' bizness it wouldn' a mattered whether I got drunk er not. Ev'y time I wants to celebrate, you is always got sump'n fuh me to do. Jes' cause somebody's got to wuk at a fun'ral don' mean I wants it to be me. De others is all dressed up an' cool an' enjoyin' deyselves. Look at us now, hot an' dirty. I'se 'most ashamed to show mah face at de buryin'."

Morris paused for a moment in his shoveling. "Well, you bettuh stop complainin' an' git to wuk, son, uh they ain' go' be no buryin'. Purty soon de folks'll be comin'." They bent again to the grave. Then Morris spoke reflectively, "I ain't eben seen Richard yit. Is you?"

Jack's voice was a mixture of envy and respect. "I talked to him fuh uh minute dis mawnin'. He's uh right high-hat boy now. He come in las' night in he new Fode. When I asked him fuh uh ride in it he jes' looked at me. He mus' be doin' awright up in Detroit. Guess he ought to, with his college edjication an' all."

"Sounds like you got de green eyes, boy," said Morris. "Richard ain' nevuh been high-hat in he life, less you call bein' high-hat lovin' he fahm an' not havin' time to hang roun' town wit' de no-count fellas you is so crazy 'bout. An' he allus been ready to he'p out anybody whut wuz in trouble. 'Member when he talked Judge Johnson intuh lettin' you outa jail?" Jack looked embarrassed.

"As fuh him doin' awright," Morris continued, nodding his head wisely, "he'll be doin' bettuh now fuh sho'. Dat fine three-hundred-acre fahm he paw done lef' him, dem cows, an' dat tractuh ain' gonna slow him down none. I allus said he wuz crazy to leave home on account uz dem two wuthless uncles uv his. It near 'bout broke he paw's heart. But he tole Sam de reason; he said nobody could fahm decent wit' dem two. He 'lowed, do, dat he only dream wuz to he'p fahm de place, an' he said he wuz comin' home to do it any time he paw got rid uh Mose an' Tyree."

Jack was puzzled. "Maybe dat's whut he meant dis mawnin'. I ast him, 'You go' be heah long? When you goin' back?' an' he say, 'Boy, I'se come home,' an' I thought cose he come home; dat's not whut I ast him."

Morris had stopped digging to expatiate. "Well, you know he useta tell he paw dat any time de sayin'-so wuz his he wouldn' put up wit' dem no-count niggers on de place. He say he wuz comin' home an' copy all de good he Papa do, an' make all de 'provements he Papa couldn' seem to git roun' to 'count dem low-life niggers hangin' onto him all dese years. He wuz right het up, an' he said any time he come to he'p out, dere would have to be some changes made. An' Sam he laughed, sad-like hit seemed tuh me (I 'member de time real good) an' he say,

'Son, you can't tunn out yo' own folks. You'll fin' out you gotta go sorta slow like sometime. Things do' allus wuk out smooth like you wants 'em to. When you fin's out dat, den you'll come home an' he'p.' But Richard he wouldn't listen. You know dat boy allus wuz kinda quick on de trigger."

Morris suddenly realized that the spading had come to a full stop. He motioned to Jack, and it was resumed at a faster pace. Then Jack muttered enviously, "Things is wukin' out purty good fuh dat boy now. I wisht we had a place like dat to live on. Some people is jes' lucky, I guess."

"Hit took more'n luck, son," said Morris. "Sam wuz smaht. He knowed how to fahm an' whut to plant, how to tell de weather, an' how to git along wit' de white folks. How he done it so good I don' know. Dey wuz willin' to he'p him when dey wouldn't he'p nobody else. An' yit dey nevuh tried to cheat him on things like dey do us 'cause dey knowed it wa'n't no use. Dey allus said he wuz de bes' nigger in de county. Cose he ain't had no decent livin' in he house since he los' his wife an' dem brothers come pilin' in on him."

"Whut you s'pose Tyree an' Mose go' do now?" Jack wondered idly. "Richard sho' ain' go' let 'em stay wit' him. You reckon Sam 'membered 'em in de will?"

"I dunno," answered Morris. "He were allus good to 'em, no matter whut dey did. Yuh know, dey moved in wit

today." Then he commented, "An' he ain' walkin' wit' he uncles, neither." His eyes shifted to the seedy, runty-looking men following close behind. "Mose an' Tyree oughta git demselves some new clothes. Dose old suits uh Sam's is too big fuh 'em."

Morris answered impatiently, "Shet yo' mouf, boy, an' le's jine in de singin'." He added admiringly, "De ladies sho' is makin' uh heap uh noise."

The women, in tones as warmly colored as their garments, were carrying the main burden of the singing. At frequent intervals one of them would lose control of herself and sob loudly and hysterically. Marred by these outbursts, but touchingly intense, the clear melody of the spiritual rang out:

Lay him down
In de col', ha'd groun'.
He's safe in de arms uh Jesus.
We wail an' moan;
He's goin' home.
He's safe in de arms uh Jesus.

The chorus was even simpler:

He's safe, he's safe,
O Lord, he's safe,
Safe in de arms uh Jesus.

When the song had ended, Preacher Baldwin began to intone, "Mah tex' is fum de third chapter uv Ecclesiastes, beginnin' to read wit' de sixteenth verse:

An' moreover I saw under de sun de place uh judgment, dat wickedness wuz dere; an' de place uh righteousness, dat iniquity wuz dere. I said in mah heart, Gawd shall jedge de righteous an' de wicked: fuh dere is a time dere fuh ev'ry purpose an' fuh ev'ry wuk. I said in mah heart concernin' de estate uh de sons uh men, dat Gawd might manifest dem, an' dat dey might see dat dey demselves are beasts. Fuh dat which befallth de sons uh men befallth beasts; eb'n one thing befallth dem: as de one dieth, so dieth de other; yea, dey have all one breath; so dat uh man hath no preminence above uh beast; fuh all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of de dus', an' all tuhn to dus' ag'in.

Thus endeth de readin' uh de Scripture. Brethren an' sistren, y'all folks know Brother Powell wuz a good man. De white folks knowed he wuz a good man. He wuz one uh de righteous. Dat's cause Brother Powell lived by de Good Book. Whut de Good Book say, dat's whut he done. He nevuh got into no Sad'dy night cuttin's. He never wuz knowed to be gittin' drunk, er to be mean to his wife while she livin'. De Good Book say dat ev'ry tub gotta stan' on its own bottom. Dat's one thing he reely believed in. He wuz knowed fuh standin' on he own bottom. He done made good fuh himself in dis worl', while he heah. When de church do' open, he he'p open it. When time fuh collectin' come roun', he allus put in twice as much as anybody. Brother Powell wuz uh pow'ful fine fellow. I can hear de angels in Heb'n makin' a jubilee, 'Heah come a man who lived by de Good Book. Heah come a man who loved his Jesus.'"

The six pall-bearers, amid dead silence, lowered the coffin slowly into the grave. Preacher Baldwin prayed, "Lawd, we all come fum de dus', an' we all got to go to de dus'. Lawd, you know Brother Powell wuz a good man, an' Lawd, we knows he's on his way to walk de streets uh gol'. Lawd, you knows whut's bes' fuh yo' chillun. We all gwine meet you some day in dat place, where dey ain' no col', where dey's good things tuh eat an' no mo' wuk. Take care uh us all till nex' church day, so's we kin have a big congregation intendance. An' now, Lawd, we is got to say goodbye to thy suhvant. We ain' gonna see him no mo' on dis earth. We got to leave him in de col' groun', to worms an' corruptin'. We ain't gonna see him no mo' till we meets in Glory. But we is all got to go de same way, Lawd. Yes, Lawd," he concluded, "we is got to go de same way."

He picked up the largest wreath from the pile which had been arranged near the grave and flung it on the coffin. As cries of "Yes, Lawd," and sobs and wailing shrieks mounted from the women, the men threw the other wreaths in the same place. Only Richard stood stiffly apart. The storm of emotion passed as quickly as it had come. The pall-bearers laid aside their coats and picked up the shovels. After saying appropriate words to Richard and his uncles, the mourners began walking by twos and threes across the dry cotton rows toward the church yard and the waiting wagons and battered cars. The last flowers were placed on the completed grave, and Morris observed to Jack as they, too, started across the cotton field, "Brother Baldwin is a pow'ful fine speaker, but I kinda wish ol' Brother Lucas hadda been heah. He wuz a frien' uh Sam's in de ol' days, an' he'd a knowed whut to say 'bout him."

Jack answered scoffingly, "Whut you allus fussin' fuh, Papa? Ain' nobody roun' heah kin touch Brother Baldwin at a fun'ral." His tone grew puzzled, "Richard didn' seem ez tore up ez I thought he'd be. Lotsa folks wuz makin' mo' noise dan him."

"Listen, boy," Morris retorted, "don't you know de grief dat don't say nothin' is de wors' kin'? But Richard'll git ovuh it. Now he kin fahm like he allus wanted to. Wonder when we is gonna fin' out 'bout de will?"

"I dunno, Paw," answered Jack. "I jes' know one thing. Me an' Joe an' Billy is reely gonna git drunk tonight. Dat's de only way to do aftuh a big fun'ral like dis."

Meanwhile Richard still stood by the grave. Tyree and Mose came up noiselessly behind him; Tyree touched him on the arm. "Le's go, boy. Ain' gonna do no good, stayin' heah."

Richard answered politely, "You go on, Uncle Ty. I'll come to the house in a little while."

"Well, long as you gonna stay heah," said Mose as if the idea had just struck him, "guess we mought as well keep you comp'ny. Come to think of it, dis would be a good time to talk a little biz

by church. Richard watched Tyree's nervous bounce and Mose's placid, maddeningly slow amble until his uncles were out of sight.

Just so they had walked away to town that long-ago Saturday afternoon with the money from the sale of his calf in their pockets, knowing that he could not disturb his father and stop them. Again he heard Tyree's glib assurance, "Don' take on so, boy. We is gwine pay you back outa whut we wins t'night. You kin buy another calf." Again he felt the sick wave of anger and frustration rise within him. How could his father have been so patient all these years? How could he have stood the slovenliness of Mose and Tyree's women after his wife's death? Richard remembered vaguely how the house used to be, white-washed and orderly and clean. He remembered the well that his father had dug at one corner of it, a deep well with a bucket, since deserted by Mose and Tyree for the shallow, pump-equipped cistern in the front yard. He remembered his mother's cooking, replaced after her death by those eternal staples, hog meat and cornbread and molasses. Priscilla and Bessie were too lazy even to raise chickens. His father had shown little interest in the house in recent years; he had had enough to do to keep Mose and Tyree in line. It was almost impossible to get honest labor from them; they hardly knew what it was to turn an honest dollar; yet they had a sublime confidence in the power of credit. His father had finally told the storekeepers in town, white and black, that he could not be responsible for their debts. Even so, on more than one occasion only his intervention—and money—had kept them from going to jail.

Still, Richard reflected, Papa had managed to get along with them somehow. Papa thought you had to stick by your family or you weren't the man you ought to be. What was it Papa had said when he left for Detroit? "You'll fin' out someday, son, dat things don' allus wuk out smooth like you wants 'em to." Well, this would be the toughest job he had ever tackled; but since Papa had wanted it so much, he would try.

At the same time, Richard thought fiercely, he would not be victimized. Mose and Tyree would have to earn what they spent. There was enough for all of them, but his uncles would have to work, and they could not be allowed to throw his money away on whatever they took a fancy to. When he saw them at the house, he'd tell them so.

Before turning to go, Richard looked down at the grave and saw that one of the larger wreaths had toppled over and fallen on the ground. He picked it up and laid it carefully among the other flowers. Then he started for the mile-distant cabin.

As he walked up the little dirt road that led into the farm, he noted the grassy cotton on either side. "Papa must have been under the weather all summer," he muttered. "He'd never have let the crop get like this." He remembered other summers, spent in the sweaty labor of chopping cotton, and his father's voice saying, "This row am lookin' fine, Son. You ain' missed a bit uh grass." Other Augusts had been prideful months, the crop laid by, and the clean rows of thick cotton blooming and opening. Looking around him now, he felt sick. Mixed with the sickness was a desperate kind of anger. This place was his! He had dreamed a long time of coming home, of finding Mose and Tyree gone, and of farming with his father. College had been pleasant, Chicago had offered good pay and stimulating jobs, but this was all he had ever really wanted. He loved the place; he was not going to let Mose and Tyree lose it for him.

Cotton farming wasn't the only thing he had in mind. If only he could manage his uncles, the three of them wouldn't need much to live on. A couple of good crops, and there'd be money enough to buy some cows, fence the back clover patch, and turn it into permanent pasture. It was time to put some strength back in the land, and beef paid better than cotton anyway. Then he could begin to think about painting and shingling the house and raising a family. But he wasn't going to raise it, he decided grimly, in the same house with Mose and Tyree.

As he approached the cabin, Richard noted how queer the trim Ford looked against a background of weeds. He had to lift the hinged gate to enter the front yard. The weatherboarding of the five-room house showed only streaked remnants

of its long-ago coat of whitewash. One thing, however, Sam had insisted on. He had always kept the tin roof painted a bright green to prevent the inevitable rusting. But now a replacement strip had been added at one end of the front porch, unpainted. Beside the porch steps a sow, evidently escaped from the pen behind the house, was rooting. As he mounted the steps, Richard saw that the front door screen needed tacking. Sighing, he opened it and went inside.

The front room had grown dark in the gathering dusk, in spite of the light from the smoking kerosene lamp on the table in the corner. Beside the lamp, in honor of the funeral, stood a large, tinted photograph of Sam and his wife, taken when they were about thirty. Tyree and Mose were sitting in the two rockers on the other side of the room. "Heah de boy is now! Set down, son. Supp'uh is mos' ready," said Tyree brightly. He turned to the seven-year-old hanging on the side of his chair. "Pete, go tell yo' maw to hurry up. An' den go play wit' de other chillun. What you doin' roun' heah anyhow, under de grown folks' heels?" He turned back to Richard, who had taken his place in the straight chair close to the table, "Richard, we is willin' to stan' by our promise 'bout de talkin'. We'll wait till t'morra. Only le's don' make it no longer'n right afteh breckfuss, cause Miz Dent she say we got to decide fo' Wednesday 'bout de refusin' uv her Chevrolet."

Startled into awareness, Richard spoke flatly. "There'll be no Chevrolet this year. Just where would you get the cash to buy a Chevrolet? You won't get it from this crop, or from me. And you'll have to do better with the next crop than you did with this one if you want to spend that kind of money."

An unpleasant expression had come over Tyree's weak, mobile face. "Mebbe we bettuh git one thing straight right now. Afteh all, dey is mo' names dan your'n in dat dere will uh yo' papa's. Dis ain' jes' yo' propurtty; we's got uh sayso in it, too!"

Richard's hands gripped the sides of his chair. "Now, listen. We're not going to start taking out before we start putting in. After next year's crop there'll be time enough for talking about a Chevrolet."

"You kin 'fo'd to say dat." Tyree's tone was rising a little. "You is a'ready got yo' cah. You is a'ready got yo' money. You ain' nevu' had it ha'd yit. You don' know how it feels to be po'. Well, now we ain' po' no mo' neither, an' you mought as well git use' to it."

Mose picked this moment to put in placatingly, "Come on, boy. Give us uh advance on nex' year's crop. We is got to git uh raddio an' some furnitoor anyways

de way you thinks nohow. You bettuh take yo' new-falutin' notions an' go somewheres else."

"You worthless—" Richard had risen. He slammed his fist on the table, jarring the lamp and knocking over the picture. Mose and Tyree recoiled from his rage. After a moment he regained control of himself and spoke with low-pitched venom, "All right. I'll sell the place and you can have your money. You can throw it away and starve to death for all I care. Thank God I'll never have to listen to your whines again." As he started toward the door, he saw the overturned picture. Putting it under his arm, he turned and left the room.

GEORGE LANNING:

Flowers on Sunday

All through the room, illuminated by dusty shafts of sunlight falling through the long windows, and by the electric candles projecting from their copper sconces, the heads bobbed and dipped and turned and paused; the murmur of the old voices undulated from wall to wall, slipped with the opening of a door into the kitchens, drifted with the notes of dust down the well of the stair, floated through the passageway and out into the street, where the clatter of traffic absorbed the fragile murmur into its larger sound, and so swept it away; the waiters fluttered like white pigeons among the tables; and the old heads bobbed and dipped and turned and paused.

Had it been possible for one to survey them from above, the heads would have resembled so many large, improbable flowers—violet, pale rose, blue, lemon yellow, magenta: for each head was surmounted, indeed dominated, by a hat, and each hat was a cluster of buds or a bursting bloom. The flowers, seen from above, moved variously in a capricious breeze that struck each from a different angle, so that the magenta rose swooped forward when the cluster of violets swayed back. The old women were talking, but it was this profuse, gentle, colorful movement that one would see from one's eminence; and even on a level, where the flowers could be discerned as individual hats, one saw first the violets and roses, and only second the stems that supported them: old stems, bearing these last, bright blossoms.

Their meals consumed, the old women rose from their tables and disappeared down the stair. When, through a window, one saw them emerge into the street, the illusion was shattered; removed from their fellows, the flowers were seen for what they were: hats. The women paused in the pale sunlight, blinking; some hailed buses and hoisted one another aboard; some crept into cabs; some moved up the street, pausing uncertainly at corners, scurrying with nervous haste through the Sunday traffic; some vanished down the stairs and did not reappear—put away, one assumed, in the damp darkness of the cellars, where their blooms might not wilt.

Turning away from the window, one saw the illusion spring alive again; for the old women had been succeeded by others—surely not the same? (though they looked all alike).

"I'll have the turkey," one of them was saying. "And let me see: tomato soup; and coffee with cream with the meal. And this lady" (nodding at her companion) "will have the breaded veal. And she's going to have some soup!"

The waiter flickered away, and the second woman said, "You're funny," and smiled, and grunted.

"I never know whether that waiter has heard what I've said to him."

"I don't remember him. I'm quite hungry today."

"Oh, you must know him. He's served us for the last three Sundays—don't you remember he brought me cabbage slaw the week before last, when I expressly asked for tomato aspic? . . . Well, it doesn't matter. I'm glad you've decided to have the soup. It's foolish not to take it when they charge you, anyway."

Standing in front of his still-packed suitcase in his father's bedroom, he glanced down at the picture in his hands, "Papa, this wouldn't be smooth enough even for you." He laid the picture face down on the folded clothing, closed and strapped the suitcase, and walked out of the house without a backward glance.

Tyree and Mose followed him as far as the porch and watched the Ford rolling down the dirt road between the rows of scraggly cotton. As the thick cloud of dust began to settle, Tyree turned to his brother and smiled nervously. "Aw shucks, let him go. We'll git along. That boy allus did have notions. Whut diffunce do *be* make?"

She leaned forward, conspiratorial. "You aren't really *sure* about tomatoes?"

Her companion lifted a large white handkerchief to her mouth, and hawked delicately. She removed the linen from her lips, looked sadly at its contents, and, folding it once over, plunged it into the depths of her black leather bag. "Well . . . no," she said. The phlegm rattled in her throat, clotting the interjection. "But the doctor told me to avoid any foods that I remembered eating before an attack, and tomatoes. . . ." Her throat filled again with phlegm, and she subsided, clearing it feebly. She put her bag on the table, smoothed her dress over her knees, and spread the napkin on her lap. She was short, heavy, with an evident stoop of her thick shoulders. Her dress was dark blue, with small white polka-dots; at the high V of the neck clung a coral and gold and white cameo; it dangled a little drunkenly, as if insecure in its pinning; her shoes were black, laced, low-heeled. Her hat was a bower of blue and gray pansies, fastened to black straw. The brim of the hat shadowed the plump face, shadowed the high, pencilled brows, the short nose; shadowed, even, the eyes, which were alert and very blue behind painted lashes. Only the mouth—thin and red—emerged from the shadow: a garish streamer; striking a note of bravado beneath the glory of the velvet garden. "I am I!" it might have cried. But it did not, for the handkerchief rose again, and instead the lips pursed, the throat contracted, the woman hawked and spat.

The waiter had returned with the soup.

"You won't forget that I like an extra pitcher of cream with my coffee?" said the larger woman. The scarlet nails on her left hand clicked against the table top, anxious lest he had forgot this small detail since last Sunday. The moss roses and stiff green veiling on her hat quivered sympathetically.

The waiter made what appeared to be a hieroglyphic on his pad, smiled, and sped away.

They spooned their soup in silence. Presently, the moss roses said, "Now. Tell me what you've been doing with yourself. I tried to get you twice through the week." She patted her lips hastily with her napkin, and said, "I've been having more fun! Tuesday I had dinner with Edward and Lily—they've wanted me to come out for weeks, but I haven't felt up to it. We had a grand evening. Janie—you know, the older daughter—is going to have a baby in March."

"I know. Edith Fletcher's an old friend of Lily's, and she told me at Club last week."

"Oh? Why, I saw Edith in the elevator last Sunday—just before I met you—and she didn't say a *word*. . . ." The plaintive tone sharpened, hung quivering with hostility over the dark table, and shivered into fragments as the voice continued, with careful lightness, "Edith's so funny about those things. My goodness, I'm Ed's oldest cousin. I used to change Janie's diapers. . . ." She shrugged. "Then, Wednesday, I had lunch with Molly Pfeiffer, and that night I went to the movies—all by myself! can you imagine?—and Thursday—Thursday, I was so tired from all my trotting that I was in bed by seven; and Friday morning I had my appointment with the doctor: he says he never really thought I'd pull through, that it's just miraculous. Then—let me see: Saturday, I went shopping with Mrs. Turner; I met her in the lobby, and she was on her way to

Wanamaker's, so I walked over with her, and we bought a lamp for her nephew, who's getting married — I can't remember when. . . ."

The waiter brought the turkey and veal, and collected the soup bowls.

"May we have more rolls?" said the woman. "And don't forget the coffee." She inclined the moss roses over the table. "You'll have your coffee now, too, won't you?" She straightened, frowned. "Where is he? Honestly, isn't that just like the help these days — never let you finish what you're saying. If he forgets, he'll just have to make an extra trip." She sighed. "Anyway, dear, tell me what you've been doing."

"Not much. I saw The Girls one night. Millie had a few of us in, and they drove up from the country."

"I haven't seen Millie lately; she used to call me all the time, and I got so tired of it I finally had to stop answering the phone. So you've been to a party; that's nice."

"Not really a party; just a few of the old bunch."

"Goodness, how thick we used to be! I'm glad I've got away from that sort of thing. I really don't know how you put up with them."

The waiter returned, bearing the rolls, two cups of coffee, and three small pitchers of cream, two of which he placed before the moss roses. He scribbled again on his pad and departed.

They attacked their meals with gusto, eating with the concentration of very young children. The flowers dipped and lifted, dipped and lifted; the napkins fluttered to the lips, dabbed ineffectually, removing nothing but lipstick, and were returned, in a crumpled and disreputable state, to the capacious laps. Forks clattered, and the cups rattled in their thick saucers; the short, fat woman hawked again, and spat furtively into her handkerchief, and looked apologetically at her companion. The asparagus vanished, as did the breaded veal and the extra rolls and the coffee and turkey.

They ceased eating simultaneously, with the same abruptness with which they began.

"I suppose May was there?"

"Yes. The girls picked her up on their way in. She and Floyd are celebrating their fortieth anniversary this Wednesday."

"Party?"

"Just a dinner. May says she doesn't want too much bother."

"That's just like May. Did you get an invitation yet?"

"Yesterday."

"I am going out to Edward's Wednesday afternoon. They want me to stay for the weekend. Ed says it's always a treat to have me around, though heaven knows what he means by that."

"That's nice."

"Did May tell you I ran into her last week at Sloanes'?"

"No."

"Oh? Well, we only talked a minute, of course. You know, you really *ought* to break away from the bunch. Lot of old sticks."

"I enjoy them. We've known each other so long. I'm having them in the week after next. If you'd like to come? . . ."

The moss roses drew back. "No, thank you. If May Welch thinks she can——"

The waiter returned and handed them menus. They ordered their desserts. "And I'll have another cup of coffee," said the moss roses. "And you're going to have one with me," she said to her companion.

"Am I? Well, now, I don't——" But the waiter fled; the gaiety vanished. The two women shifted heavily in their chairs, regarded the now-denuded table, and re-examined the menu with scrupulous care. Presently, the larger woman said, "Seems to me you've been having quite a time. Party one night, and Club Friday, I suppose?"

The other nodded, and attacked the ice cream the waiter had set before her. "And May and I went to the movies last night."

"This coffee tastes bitter. Dear! I suppose I'll never get that waiter back." She sighed, and drank her coffee.

They picked up their checks, reaching toward them with a sort of eager politeness, as if each feared that the other would take the smaller check (the bills were the same).

Grasping them tightly, clutching their purses and scarves and gloves, they rose and moved slowly along the line of tables and down the stair. Watching, one saw the moss roses descend first, drooping, it seemed, a little. The blue and gray pansies followed, jerking at their straw mooring with a certain victorious abandon. Through the window, one saw them emerge from the building, pause against the light, and then cross the avenue: two old women.

Turning back, one saw that their table was already occupied. Violets and lilies-of-the-valley faced each other; one woman sneezed, and the other said, briskly, "I haven't seen you since Thursday. Was the party nice? . . ."

The light through the windows had diminished, as if the sun had power no longer to project itself beyond the panes; the room grew darker, and the electric candles shone more brightly. The old faces, shadowed by the brims, in the shadowed room, looked pinched and shrivelled and white. Still, the flowers bloomed brightly, flamboyant in the dusk, bobbing and dipping, and turning and pausing, unaware of the night that was coming.

JACK BOYD:

Poem

the act covers acres; bare feet break new sod
and come to meadows lying fallow, some is furrowed:
the boles of corn give a hopeful and diurnal light;
but soon the dust will bubble like a cauldron,
free again when the plough of blunted purpose staggers
on its side, its wounds spurting rust beyond clock's time

yet a rock grows in its hand-laid place; for the flicker
of a century the wall will take some sun to make some shade;
the moss holds green like islands in the chipped stone waves;
but the wall affects to split a little air indivisible as a dream;
there aren't worms that wait, though scores of chains of them
will ring the intellection, nor is the angel's silvered wing yet seen

Poem

the mosses of memory make their way
upon these present rocks; i throw
smooth pebbles into the dark waters
of myself, and wonder how they fall,
and where they rest; and each small
splash leaves the scar of its ring
in my tree's crooked bole; and another
august's old and tarnished starlight
looms before my senses like an elegy
written in soft chalk

CLARA CHILDS:

Ebb Tide

The tide was coming in. Ridiculous how you could forget a thing like tide. It inched in spume-edged circles up the sand. It ate away small slices of the beach. Watching its undulations you could begin after a while to think it was alive. Your eyes got the habit. After that for a moment the floor seemed to have the same sinuous pulsing, only silent and soon stilled.

Letitia felt uneasy. Her eyes played tricks with her. She had almost forgotten the tide came in like that, but she was remembering it now. She was remembering another pattern, too.

The porch . . . but wider, without screens . . . the sea not so close as this . . . the half-heard trickling of voices, one distinct, deeper than the rest. It was Albert . . . young again, standing very straight in his Academy uniform. He was complimenting her hands. And there was sister Mary of the coy voice and mouse eyes. The three of them leaving the voices of the porch, walking toward the beach . . . they were dancing or running like sand-pipers in the moonlight along the water's edge. Albert took sister Mary's hand . . . two running ahead, one standing alone . . . to learn for the first time how slowly the tide comes in, how slowly and how stealthily, until suddenly it rushes over your shoes if you are not looking or if you are thinking of something else . . . it catches you unawares . . .

Letitia moved the chair so that it no longer faced the incoming tide. The breeze snapped the screens in their frames. It lifted the lace of her collar and fluttered it against her throat. She shivered in spite of the mid-morning heat.

"Are you cool, Miss Letitia? Let me get you a sweater." The girl in the hammock folded back the page of the magazine she was reading and swung her bare feet to the floor.

"No, dear. I'm fine. Now you just stay still." Her ball of crochet thread rolled from her lap as she spoke and lodged beneath her chair, out of reach. The girl crossed the porch and knelt by her chair to retrieve it for her. Letitia had always wished for a daughter, a slim girl with smooth tanned cheeks. She wanted to reach out and touch the near cheek, glowing with youth. Instead, she took the ball of thread and dropped it into the shopping bag beside the slips of mint, thyme, and sage wrapped about with damp newspaper.

Home is a place with an herb garden, she was thinking; a cat on the back porch washing itself in the sun. Before she left she had had to give the cat to Miss Fitz, next door, but the herbs she had brought with her. She wondered if the frail plants would grow here. There was so much sand . . .

She missed the old house already. She had thought she wouldn't. The wicker chairs on the veranda . . . the fanlight above the front door . . . the pale trapezoids of pink, blue, amber which reflected from its colored panes to the hall carpet . . . afternoon sun through the Virginia creeper and wistaria vines . . . the newel post at the foot of the stair worn smooth with the touch of many hands, of Albert's, of sister Mary's, of her own. The fireplace . . . loose tiles in the hearth she always meant to have fixed. Albert's heavy leather chair . . . her own rocker by the window. There on countless nights they had sat, waiting. Mary had died slowly, almost stealthily . . . one going ahead, two left standing . . . to learn how death comes, like the tide, catching you unawares . . .

Two left standing . . . far apart, silent with fear . . . too old, too late discovering the mistake, the wrong path taken. Far across a bridge of time had stood the wide-porched Bay House, the moon among the live oaks, and a trickling sound of half-heard voices. Far on the other side of a river of living was that grasping of a hand, that running ahead by two and the leaving behind of one . . . the wrong hand taken, the wrong one left behind. They had both known, but there had been no shaping of it into words. Albert had admired her hands in the firelight. That was enough.

She scrutinized her hands as those of a stranger. The veins ran in smooth blue chords between the flesh and the narrow bones. They were not old hands. She looped the crochet thread through her fingers and began to make the lacy piece grow under her swift needle.

It was odd, she thought, how her life had worked out. Here she was on Edisto near the Bay again. She had come back across the bridge in time, over a river of living, into her past—hers and Albert's. She would have him at last, but not as she had once planned. Still he eluded her. Albert's dying had come swiftly, not like Mary's; more as a tidal wave rises of a sudden, a deluge that had swept her away in its torrent. Now they were even once more. It was a crazy game of dominoes . . . one and two, two and one, one and two. Yet . . . she would live in the house on the Bay, among live oaks. She would always hear his young voice, and see him as she had known him first, straight and handsome in his high-collared uniform. True, she would sit down by the fire with old ghosts and molded memories, trying to turn back time like pages in an album. Pale roses and ribbons, misted photographs . . . if they could not stretch across time to her, she would return in time to them . . .

The slim, brown-cheeked girl got up from the hammock and came to her.

"You've been so still, Miss Letitia, I thought you were asleep. It's after twelve, I think, and the other boarders will be coming in. I'll see if Florence has lunch ready."

Letitia carefully folded her lace piece and followed the girl into the kitchen. A blue-black Gullah with mellow tones chanted as she moved from sink to stove preparing the meal.

"When did you say the car would be back from town, Margaret?" Letitia asked the girl.

"Not until after five. Did you need 'specially to go somewhere?"

"Well, yes. I'd planned on going out to see my property over on the Bay."

"Not on the Bay, Miss Letitia! You've still got property over there?"

"Yes, it was left me by my brother-in-law. That's why I'm making this trip to the Island. I plan to live down here, you know."

"No, I didn't. Mama and Father will be so glad to know you're staying down. Where'll you live?"

"Oh, there's a house on my property. It used to be my brother-in-law's old home. He passed on some months ago and left all he had to me. I have so many memories there. We used to come down as girls on house parties, my sister and I. He proposed to her right in that very house. I haven't seen it since those days. Yes, I decided to part with the house up country. The taxes were high, and so few friends left, now. I'm going to live right here, very simply, to the end."

"But surely, Miss Letitia, whoever left you the property must have told you . . ."

"No. I didn't know a thing about it until his lawyer read the will. My brother-in-law was a very quiet man, and unhappy, too, in many ways. During the depression he lost practically everything he had but a few pieces of property that wouldn't sell. That blow was really too much for him. They came to live with me, and my sister and I nursed the poor man back to health. So you see, after all that, it means a great deal to me to come back."

The young girl bit her lip and turned away. Letitia wondered. Why had she told this child what she couldn't explain to herself? She wanted to be sure she had done right to leave home, up country, all she had known . . . her herb garden, the wistaria which had seemed to anchor the house in place with its gnarled branchings . . . If only she could be sure she would find here what she sought . . .

Silently, the girl had moved about setting the places. Now, as she spoke, she stood by the table not looking at Letitia, but beyond her toward the sea.

"Elijah can take you out to the Bay in his cart, Miss Letitia, if you feel you must go." She spoke slowly, smiling half sadly. "You'll have to see it for yourself, I suppose."



It wasn't the uneven pitching of the cart or even the sand gnats that troubled her at the moment. It was the thought that every instant the sun was fading the blue of her best straw hat. Letitia shifted her shopping bag to the opposite arm and drew out the hat pin with her free hand. It was a little soon to tell. Still, it was bound to fade.

Crows flying up with a leathery flapping of wings and a rattle of calls made her look around. She couldn't remember this road. It was hedged on one side by palmettoes in bristling ranks, on the other by feathery tamarisk. Between the trees and beyond were glimpses of flat fields lying fallow, overgrown with myrtles and choked with cockleburrs.

The Island had once welcomed her more kindly. Along the fields there had been bright patches of color blending as the calico-clad Negro women chopped between the cotton rows or leaned to rest on their oversized hoes. The passing buggy had called forth greetings in mellifluous Gullah, falling harmoniously even on her unaccustomed ears. There had been, in those days, high, clear heart laughter in the fields, a singing down the even rows. Now, myrtle flats matted the earth and crows flew up in alarm.

The old Negro dozed on the board seat with his switch dragging in the sand. The ox was trying to dislodge a cloud of stinging deer flies that worried its back. It kept its jerky pace although Elijah no longer prodded it.

At length the road led across a marsh creek and directly onto the beach from which the Bay spread in a wide blue crescent. The ox stopped to nuzzle a patch of dry sea oats. Elijah sat up with a start when Letitia spoke to him.

"You wait here and I'll walk on down to the house," she instructed. Her near-sighted eyes caught the blurr of sand bluffs in the distance.

With a light step she hastened, almost running. A dainty trail of prints marked the path of her narrow shoes. She did not have to go a great distance to see clearly the grove of dead oaks, stark white derelicts sloping from the deserted bluffs. In the midst of the grove a pair of vultures swooped and tore at the flesh of a rotting fish.

"This isn't the Bay! Where have you brought me, you black devil?" Her entire frame shook with a paroxysm of sudden wrath and desperate hope.

Elijah blinked, unmoving.

"No, Maum. Dis de only place by dat name. Ain't no house here fum fo' da storm. Dat fo' I born, Maum. I ain't fuh know. 'Fore Gawd, Maum, I ain't fuh know!"

You'll have to see for yourself, I suppose . . .

The girl had known . . . why hadn't she told . . . why . . . Because it was a fearful thing to know . . . to have to tell . . .

The tides had been washing here for a long, long time. Since the big earthquake, the storm of the 'nineties, perhaps . . . it was so long ago . . . and he had never told her . . . There was much he'd never said. Poor Mary . . . but, after all, Mary had been his wife . . . This was the only thing left for her, Letitia, which was to be her life. His strip of sand, his grove of rotted trees . . . twisted, warped like his life into a deadly joke.

Bewildered, half comprehending, she gazed at the mute shore, the ghost grove which mocked with naked branches at the darkening sky. The ebb tide swirled about their trunks, sucking at their roots.

Letitia watched the horizon swim in tears. Loneliness made her numb. She had not cried thus for fifty years. She was remembering the other pattern again. One left alone . . . only one to learn that as the tide flows so must it ebb, imperceptibly . . . but one is not caught by it unawares . . .

Going back she found the herbs had dried and withered completely. She tossed them from the bridge. As the bundle fell into the creek, the newspaper wrapping slowly unwound. She saw the wind catch it like a toy sail boat, and carry it out with the tide into the Bay.

MARK HEDDEN:

Poem

Pride, pride in the act.

The long sun bleeds low overhead,
And greek lackeys press their stained
Tall horses into the Aegean's upturned snout.

The bare rock down
Carves ocean's winter flowers,
Struck by the wind's hammer
Into whitened bloom.

The petals separate,
Yet her dark fingers
Whip like tendrils of fever,
Spreading thin concussions
Over the shoals and foam.

Under the blood of the sun
The gashed ruin.
But the fly hovers:
Its veined, gothic wing winnowing,
Evoking, a sharp spindle revolving,
Returning each unseasoned
Thought on its pivot of unreason.

The salt stings violent eyes,
Salt of Gemisto, Laertes, and Kadmus of Tyre,
Salt Wilson never had beyond
The effrontery to face Le Tigre.

On the jagged shore of Phéacia
Odysseus rose out of the ebb-tide,
Entangled in rough weed.

Under the blood of the sun
The past's leechings:

Astyanax' brains are clotted on Hector's sweaty shield,
And Hecuba digs, her grief knotted, into the roots
Of the flower, and becomes slave! But with a scorning laugh.

Fear, fear for the coming of night. And we hid.
Formed in a V, the rigid insects lowered
Over Wren's high London. And Chickamauga
Ended the Confederacy that had no end of
Generals, but a lack of fighters.

The flare-arched night's fallen
and the ash dawn bends through
The glass panes, with no posture
Of time, nor ruined reflection.

Better to let old faults bleach
Where they lie, the act done pridefully,
Than to hesitate, fearful of talk,
Delicate fingers over the photographs,
Or last words on Freud and his conclusions.

Better to set anew Trojan walls, seven times over,
Though they be doomed by greater floods than those
Out of the broken sea-wall at Ur.

JOANNE McLEAN:

The Mourning

Loie moved her head restlessly in the darkness, pushing it down against the hard arm that curved under it and around her body. The back of her neck was aching and sweating against the arm, but it crushed her closer so that her body touched Mrs. Hawley's all along and her face was pushed into the hollow. She tried to turn away.

Mrs. Hawley stroked her shoulder. "You're not asleep, Lois," she said; "you are worried about your grandmother." She hugged Loie closer. "It's all right now, dear. We have prayed to the Lord. And 'whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive'."

Loie remembered. They had knelt on the rug beside the day-bed. "Dear God, please let Old Mama live," she had prayed. But Mrs. Hawley had prayed longer, and Loie's knees had itched and got all red and cross-stitched like the pattern in the rug.

"I am hot," Loie said.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder, child. You shouldn't be sleeping in your Easter dress anyway and it's too late for your mother and father to be coming back for you tonight. You had better take it off now," Mrs. Hawley raised herself on the day-bed and helped Loie unbutton.

"I believe Elizabeth is asleep," she said, listening to the breathing. "In her new dress, too." She shook her head.

Loie lay back down on the bed.

"Now, don't worry, dear," Mrs. Hawley patted her. "Just breathe deeply and you'll go to sleep."

Mrs. Hawley's arm did not come back around her, and Loie stretched in the darkness. She breathed deeply and counted, one—two—three—four.

In the morning the sun was like on Easter, warm and bright. But Mrs. Hawley's eyes were rimmed and clouded. They looked down at Loie and Elizabeth. "It was not God's will," she said. Her voice was broken a little as she went on, "Your mother and father say you had best go on to school today. The funeral will be tomorrow."

Loie and Elizabeth nodded. Loie went into the bedroom and began to pull on her Easter dress, slowly. She stared at it—it was rayon, white with red print flowers.

"Your sister is ready to leave," Mrs. Hawley called to her.

"Eel-beth had better go on then," Loie answered. Elizabeth was named for Old Mama, but when Loie said her name fast, it always came out "Eel-beth." She looked up at Mrs. Hawley, "She knows the way."

"But she's only six, Lois—"

"I go by myself lots of times," Elizabeth answered from the doorway. "I am going now."

Loie was almost dressed, but she buttoned her shoes, and unbuttoned them, and buttoned them again.

Mrs. Hawley's heavy arm came around her shoulders, "Lois, dear, if you'd rather not go to school today—"

"I am going," Loie said.

Loie walked to school alone. In the spring air she did a little dance-step. "I am wearing my Easter dress to school," she hummed. "Old Mama is dead," she said to herself. "Old Mama is dead."

She was near the school now, and she saw Sarah-Josephine walking to meet her. Sarah-Josephine's blond, cork-screw curls bobbed as she walked, and Loie rubbed her hand against her own hair, straight and black.

Sarah-Josephine's face was set. "Oh Lois," she said, and her voice was low like a prayer, "I'm so sorry your grandmother died."

Loie felt an angry little thing rise inside her, "Why is she sorry? It's not *her* grandmother."

"How did you know?" Loie said, pulling her hand loose from Sarah-Josephine's.

"Oh, *everybody* knows," Sarah-Josephine answered. "They announced it at church last night. You weren't there."

"Mrs. Hawley said we didn't *have* to go," Loie said. She passed Sarah-Josephine and walked ahead, leaving her just standing on the walk. She imagined that Sarah-Josephine was saying, "Well—" just like her mother said sometimes. But then Sarah-Josephine would press her hands to her sides and tell herself, "It is because her grandmother died."

"It's not *her* grandmother, anyway," Loie said.

The third grade teacher looked up strangely when Loie came in. Loie met her eyes steadily, "The funeral is tomorrow." She turned to her seat and stared down at the ink-well, away from Sarah-Josephine and all the others who were saying they were sorry. "Old Mama is dead," she said to herself slowly.

II

Mrs. Hawley pulled at the curls she had rolled into Loie's hair the night before. She was saying how glad she had been to have them stay with her. "Now tell me, dear, is there anything I can do for you? Don't you want a banana or something to take with you?"

"We won't need anything," Loie said.

"Well—it won't be the same, you know. You won't have your grandmother there to take care of you like when you used to go there. I'm sure she must have given you things . . ."

"No, she never did anything," Loie said. She pictured in her mind the fruit bowl on Old Mama's dining-room table—she was sure there must have been a fruit bowl. "We just took care of ourselves; didn't we, Eel-beth?"

Elizabeth's eyes went from Mrs. Hawley to Loie. "Yes," she agreed, "I guess so."

Loie got out of the car in front of the house. It was an old house, green with the mold-moss that grew in the damp wood and with the wistaria vines that crawled over the screened porch. It looked dark and cold somehow, Loie felt. She fell back and walked slowly behind her mother and father and Elizabeth.

She seemed suddenly to be surrounded by people. They moved back and forth across the hallway and around her, speaking low in a kind of murmur. The low murmurings of their voices and the low murmurings of their feet, moving on the rug, made a steady, sad sort of hum in the house. Loie stared around; she did not know where to put her coat. Wearing it, she walked slowly to a corner and then into the back hall. In the dining-room there were more people. She looked beyond them at the table. There was a fruit bowl, an old one with colored figures painted on it. It was empty. Loie rubbed her fingers against the edge of the bowl. "Old Mama is dead," she repeated to herself.

The sweet smell of flowers in the room with the long, banked casket was so thick that the air seemed a solid thing of sweetness. Loie felt that it hung heavily inside her and that she could not move. She felt herself hugged then in the arms of an old woman who kissed her and whispered, "Poor child—but then I suppose you don't know what death is, do you? It's better," she said; "It's better. Your grandmother is happy now." She patted Loie's head. Loie turned away and moved to the corner by the casket and hid herself behind the flowers.

The people came in a long procession, circular, past the casket. Their heads bowed there, and the women pressed handkerchiefs to their eyes. Loie did not look in the casket.

She heard a low sound, "Mama." It was Aunt Julia, standing before the casket. She seemed to swing there, holding the edge. Then her head lowered, and her lips touched the forehead. Her body in the black dress heaved slowly. "Come, Julia," Loie's father and her uncle said, taking hold of her shoulders. Aunt Julia turned her face up to them. Her eyes were full and weeping. "I had to kiss Mother goodbye," she murmured. And then she hid her face in Loie's father's shoulder.

Loie bent over and stood where Aunt Julia had stood, on tiptoe. She stared at the lavender-lace dress, at the mole on the

neck. Her eyes held on the white face. It was awfully white, as if powder had been laid on it thick over the skin. There was a little wet place, pressed down, on the forehead. Loie lifted her fingers and reached them out toward the forehead. Then she stopped. She pulled her hand down by her side and wiped it against her skirt.

She felt a kind of hush in the room. She pushed herself back toward the flowers. It was Grandpapa. He was leaning a little against the wall by the door. His eyes looked hollow and empty, staring. They did not look toward the casket or the flowers. And his hands accepted loosely, the hands pressing them . . . a woman . . . a little girl, a little girl with blond, cork-screw curls. The little girl turned her face up toward him; she spoke in a clear voice that broke a little at the end, "I am sorry, Dr. Matthews."

Loie felt something cold inside. She moved behind Grandpapa and, reaching up, touched his coat edge. He turned, his eyes full on Loie. He stumbled past and went down the hall to his room.

The church in the early afternoon was brown and yellow with the sunlight through stained-glass windows and the candles that burned above the closed casket. Loie sat in the pew beside her mother and Elizabeth, whose stomach was growling. On the row in front were Grandpapa and Aunt Julia, her uncle, and her father.

JOANNE McLEAN:

Lenoir

A leak of rain came in the back window and wet the little boy's neck. He shifted in the black corner of the car and rubbed at his eyes. It had waked him from the half-sleep he had been in, and he looked out through blurry eyes at the black, heavy rain, shining in icy-looking blisters against the car windows when the lightning flashed. It seemed to him that the car was all hums. The rain was a thick sound, beating heavily. There was the hum of the motor, and the sputtery hum of the heater that didn't work very well so it didn't warm the back at all. And there was the hum of Aunt Edna's snoring up front, and the low stirring of the baby's breathing on the seat beside him. Only the outline of Uncle Thomas Lord didn't hum. Uncle Thomas was thick and heavy-set, and the head on his shoulders was like a big rock. The little boy remembered the head pushed against the church pew that mornings. They had knelt on the cushioned ledge of the pew. And Uncle Thomas had laid his hand on the little boy's head and told him to pray. But the hand had been so heavy against him he had felt himself pushed deep into the cushions and ached. At the time he had only wished the weight would go away.

Thomas Lord lifted his hand from the wheel and jerked the car into reverse. "Goddamn!" he said, "fool woman walking on the road in this storm!"

The little boy was thrown forward. He looked down and saw the long ugly scar on Uncle Thomas's right hand; and even now, the jerk and all, though he had seen it many times, he felt the coldness go through him when he saw it. Aunt Edna had turned herself sideways and was asking, "What is it, Thomas? What is it?" and then, "Bertie, is Baby Charles all right?"

The little boy said, "Yes'm," without even looking.

Thomas Lord turned his head and ordered the little boy to watch the road. "A woman, Edna," he explained, "out in this storm with a child!"

Aunt Edna pulled at the knot of her hair. "Do you think we should, Thomas? Is it safe? You know Charles . . ." She stared at the window. "The storm, yes . . ." she said. "Bertie, hand me Charles into the front seat when we stop."

The minister who led the service spoke in deep, low tones about Old Mama and the life she had lived. He recited a prayer. And when he began to say how beautiful it was that she had chosen the day of the Lord's Resurrection to go and be with Him in Heaven, Loie saw her mother wiping her eyes and Elizabeth crying in her lap. She thought that now it would be the time to cry, that it would be all right for her to cry, too. She turned at the sound of loud weeping at her side. It was Sarah-Josephine's mother crying, but she forced a smile at Loie. Loie looked away. She stared at the polished rail of the casket and did not listen to the rest of the service.

III

It was the end of April, the Easter month, and Loie knelt alone in the green-walled bathroom at home. She pressed her forehead against the ledge of the cold white bathtub, and her knees were cold against the floor. She rubbed her fingers slowly against the enamel. "I am sorry, Grandpapa," she said.

"Mother, Loie's locked the bathroom door again. Mother!" Elizabeth was beating on the door and yelling, "Make her let me in, Mother!"

Loie got up from the floor. She supposed Elizabeth would think she had been crying. But she stared in the mirror, and there were no tears.

Loie reached up and wet her eyes with the wash-cloth. Then she unlocked the door.

The little boy nodded. He saw a blurred white thing by the road and called to Uncle Thomas. The car stopped slowly beside the white figure.

The little boy felt the rain sweep in the open door and smelled the smell of damp wool. The woman was all wet and dripping beside him, and something soft and matted rubbed against his hand. It was wet, too, and cold—wet hair. He moved his hand and pushed over in the corner.

The child in the woman's arms coughed and shook, straining. The little boy heard it call, like a frightened thing, "Ma-ma, ma-ma." The woman smoothed the child's forehead, "Here, Carrie, here," she said.

Charles was awake in the front seat, crying and kicking, so the little boy couldn't hear all the questions Uncle Thomas was asking. He just saw that set look of "Now-look-what-you've-done" on Aunt Edna's face, and every time the strange child coughed, she jerked a little.

"Lenoir!" Thomas Lord said. "Good God, woman, don't you know that's over a hundred miles from here? This isn't even the right road."

The woman in the back seat—all shadowed in the dark so the little boy couldn't see her—trembled a little. "The man at the filling-station," her voice was hollow, "bout five mile back told me it was only roun' thirty. So I thought we could walk it maybe."

"With a child, and in this storm?"

"Well, it weren't stormin' so bad then, just sorta' drizzlin', and I thought we could make it. I got to get to Lenoir. But Carrie she did get sorta' tired, and I had to take her up in my arms, sorta' heavy-like. That slowed us down."

Aunt Edna broke in, "How long have you been on the road?"

"Three days," the woman answered. "We come from South Carolina. But we only started out *this* mornin' at ten o'clock."

Thomas Lord looked down at the clock—eleven at night. "Good Lord," he said. Then he stopped, looking at Edna, and asked the woman why she was going to Lenoir.

"My mother told me they was wantin' work in Lenoir," she answered. "The hosiery factory, or somethin'." She seemed to tighten all up then. The child pulled at her wet coat, "Ma-ma." She hushed the little girl, "Don't throw your arms 'round

like that, Carrie. You'll be wettin' the little boy." She looked up, "You've got a fine little boy, don't talk all the time."

"My nephew," Thomas Lord cleared his throat, "sister's boy, with us for the summer."

"Well, he's a fine boy. I got a boy, you know, just two months old, he is."

Aunt Edna moved in her seat, "But you've left a two-months-old baby—"

The woman's body loosened, "Oh, it's all right. He's with my mother in South Carolina. But she just got married again, and she don't wanta' keep him. I'm gonna' send for him soon's I get work and settled in Lenoir. My husband ain't no good. He ain't been around since the boy come."

She spoke the words low, with a little bitterness; and now she was finished, she settled back in her corner. The little boy felt her mouth was tight closed and would not say anymore. He saw her face once in the lightning. It had a thin, narrow nose, the cheeks were all hollow, and the lines were hard. He felt cold again, like when he saw Uncle Thomas's scar. But he ached, too, as if his ribs were pinching him.

The car moved slowly through the night, the rain was so heavy and the road winding over the ridge of mountains. In the front seat Thomas Lord and Aunt Edna talked together about what they would do. "Lenoir is over sixty miles yet from Bremen," Thomas Lord said. They talked for awhile about the Salvation Army. But the Salvation Army's headquarters weren't in Bremen anymore, and they only came to town on Saturday. When they came, there was a big parade with cornets and a bass drum and tambourines. The little boy remembered the first he had seen. He had run out into it and given them his nickel. And it wasn't even the proper time. They took up the money afterwards.

The light in the house was blinding after the hours of darkness. The little boy stood in the light rubbing his eyes. He saw Uncle Thomas push up a couple of windows for fresh air and then walk to the telephone in the hall.

Charles was awake again, crying and wetting the floor all around him. Aunt Edna let her hands fall at her sides helplessly. Then she got him on the couch to change him.

There was a click in the hall. "This is Lord, civil engineer, speaking . . . This the county jail? . . . Oh, Morrison—"

The little boy looked around at the woman. She was just standing there near the door and off the rug. And the little girl, standing beside her, held a thin hand to the hem of her skirt. She was tiny and spindle-legged with pale, deep eyes and white-blond hair hanging in damp hanks. She stood uncertainly a moment, then hid behind her mother's legs. The woman's shoes were sogged and covered with mud. The little boy saw Aunt Edna looking at the shoes, and the woman bent down and took them off. Her clothes were black with a brown cloth coat that had sleeves too short. She was a hard-faced woman, thin, with deep, black hollows under her eyes so that she seemed always to be standing in the shadows.

"Nothing," Thomas Lord said, coming from the hallway. "Morrison checked and he says he hasn't got a place he could put a woman and a child."

Aunt Edna pulled at the knot of her graying hair. "Well, we'll just have to fix up something here," she said, "that old bed in the laundry-room, I guess."

In the kitchen the little boy stood at the stove to help Aunt Edna with the hot milk. "Carrie don't like hot milk," the woman said, "just cold milk'll do me and her."

Charles sat in Aunt Edna's lap with his hot bottle. But the little girl just sat on the high stool and held the tall glass of cold milk with her fingers, looking all around her, the faded blue eyes big and scared. "Drink, Carrie," her mother said. The little girl drooped her eyes, and her fingers got still on the glass.

"Lord, don't just sit there. Drink it, child," Thomas Lord ordered.

The little girl took the glass to her mouth at once, and gulped. Thomas Lord's brows drew into a frown, "Woman, hasn't that child eaten all day?"

The woman shifted in her chair. "We had some crackers and coke back at the filling-station," she said, her eyes down toward her long fingers pressed against the enameled table-top.

Thomas Lord cursed. "Come here, child!" he ordered the little girl. The little girl slid off her stool and moved a few steps toward him. "Three years old, you said?" he looked at the woman. "Charles is only seventeen months, and he's almost as big as she is, twice as fat."

The little girl smiled then. She poked a finger out at Charles. "Baby," she said.

Charles squirmed off Aunt Edna's lap and waddled toward her. Aunt Edna's arm reached to catch him too late. "Baby," he echoed, smiling. His eyes caught on the white-blond hair. "Hair," he cried, and threw his arms up to it.

The little girl fell back, and her eyes darkened. She held up her hands and screamed. Charles' fingers dropped from the white-blond hair, and he started screaming in answer.

Aunt Edna caught Charles up at once. The little boy moved from his corner and touched the little girl's head to calm her. The little girl wrenched loose and screamed again. He fell back, shuffling his feet, even before he saw the order on Uncle Thomas's face.

The little boy led the woman and the child up the dark, winged stairs—he liked to think of them as winged because at the turn they were little at one end, spreading out wide at the other, fan-like. He bent under the clothes-lines and pointed at the bed. The woman laid her coat down, and the thin little girl held to it. The little boy just stood around then a minute. He looked at the woman and saw her staring at the plain mattress. It was an old bed, painted green iron and sunken in the middle. He looked at the mattress. It was striped black and white with cotton wads sewn in the hollows. He felt the eyes of the woman on it, dark and hard. He thought they seemed a little wet-like. She didn't say anything, and she didn't move except once to look up at the damp sheets hanging on the lines. She just stood there, bent like something old and tired with use, and stared at the mattress.

The little boy felt his way down the dark stairs and came into Aunt Edna's bedroom. She was pulling covers over Charles, and the room smelled like the medicine she always gave him when she was afraid he was coming down with a cold.

He stood by Aunt Edna till she looked up at him. "No sheets on the bed," he said.

Aunt Edna tucked at Charles' covers and kissed his forehead. He moved restlessly in his sleep.

"There aren't any sheets on the bed," the little boy said.

"Bertie," Aunt Edna turned to him, pressing her hand over her forehead like she always did when she had a headache, "you mean you want me to put sheets on the bed? Don't you know what diseases that woman might have? And that child near pneumonia . . ."

The little boy scuffed his shoes.

"I'd have to boil them," Aunt Edna let her hands go helplessly, "if I ever dared use them again at all." She shook her head, "If it weren't for us, Bertie, that woman and her child would be out in the storm this minute, walking a hundred miles to Lenoir."

"Yes'm," the little boy said.

"Haven't you slept on that bed without sheets?"

"Just playing. It itches."

Aunt Edna's mouth loosened. "All right, get the sheets. Get those torn ones I was going to spread under the table-cloth." She turned away. "You'll have to fix them yourself. I just don't feel up to it after this night."

The little boy spread the sheets, and the woman smoothed part at the corners. He saw the torn places bulge as the sheets drew tight, and he knew the woman was seeing them. He

smoothed them flat and got an old cotton blanket out of the corner and spread it.

The little girl was asleep when he left. He wanted to touch the strange hair with his fingers; but even in her sleep, the little girl seemed to shy. His fingers trailed in the empty air. The dark, shadowed eyes of the woman held him. "Thank you; you're a good boy," she said.

It was only eight o'clock in the morning when the little boy woke to feel his bed empty, and the silence and emptiness of the house. Uncle Thomas had gone downstairs already—Uncle Thomas slept with him lots of times, when Aunt Edna had her headaches, and he snored, and rolled, and pulled all the covers off him.

The little boy lay still, sensing an emptiness as if he had had a dark dream and lost it. The woman and the little girl, he remembered. He moved silently across the hall and stood with his feet cold against the floor. He did not hear even the sounds of breathing in the room. He stooped low under the clothes-

lines and saw the pile of torn sheets folded at the bottom of the striped mattress.

The little boy walked down the stairs slowly. He found Uncle Thomas in the kitchen. "They're gone?" he said.

Thomas Lord nodded. "Left before six this morning, I imagine, even before daybreak."

The little boy saw a scrap of paper on the table. "Thank you for your kindness," it said. "Sorry do not have more money to pay." There was ten cents beside the note.

The little boy fingered the money and stared out at the sky. It was a naked, grey morning when the sky was like a granite boulder, the rain drizzling lightly. He tried in his mind to see the woman and the little girl, but they were like dreams or faded, shawled figures. "I wonder if they will get to Lenoir," he said. He thought of it, the grey sky, the silver grey money in his fingers, the grey cushions in the church with his uncle's hand pressing down on his head.

"A complete fool of a woman," Thomas Lord said. "They'll never make it to Lenoir."

SAMUEL MILLER III

The Sabbat

The mountain peak above Brockentown
With myriad legend had great renown
For here in the awesome dark of the moon
All those whom the Lord had excommunicated
Held revelry, and with blasphemous rites
Were wont to worship on Walpurgis night
The Prince of Darkness, Lucifer.

Abed I lay with a green eyed maid
All fleshly passions long allayed
Saw over her white shoulder rise
A silhouette against the darkening skies
She shuddered and her limbs now cold
Communicated her evil will
Invested me with her own desires.

ANNE POWELL:

The Locked Gate

Elliot looked around the big room, empty except for the packing cases, as he moved slowly across it to the window where he could see into the side yard. A big truck had just stopped on the grass beside the porch; two men got out of it and Elliot saw them lift their legs to drop across the banister. Most of the people were in the front yard and around the other side of the house, but he could hear the noises they made as they moved among each other. Across the hall some people were talking about the heavy old dresser that had belonged to his mother.

"It would cost too much to have it redone. See, even the back pieces are loose."

The muscle in the back of Elliot's neck grew rigid, and he had to wait for it to let go before he could close the door. He turned back into the room and sat down to watch the people with an air of indifferent curiosity. More came through the gate and he noticed that it stood open again. It hung dropped down on one hinge and the slip-latch would not catch it. He sat there staring at the gate for a long time.

Elliot Benton had first come through that gate when he was a little boy. The day they moved had been a fine one. Elliot was all excited about this new thing, and he kept moving from one side of the car to the other, pushing little things they had used to fill the spaces back and forth across the back seat. He moved around until he pushed a small lamp to the floor and his

Black Marigolds

See you not now the tiny gourd shaped breasts
That held your head when you were weary of love
And supported your heart upon the cooling sweetness of her skin?
Her lips that were twin doves of dark desire, still
Thirsting at the fount of love, ever drinking in
Rapture the very essence of thy heart?
O great fool, ere falls the scimitar think not
That having known such love, thou couldst ever
Be alone or regret this temporary separation.

mother said, "Get still," and slapped his arm and pushed him from the back of the front seat where he was hanging, yelling in her ear in a shrill voice. "Well, how far is it, just te' me how far it is? When'll we get there, Dad? When we gonna get there?"

Robert Benton wore his hat tipped so far down in the front that he always had to tilt his head back to see how to drive. He threw it still farther back and talked to the side to his son. "It isn't so far, now. You think it's way out of town 'til you get there. It is kinda to itself, but it's on the main road, so there's passing. We won't have so many people to bother us for a while, but the town's growing, I tell you. Yessir, few more years an' we'll have too many neighbors." His talk sounded gay and he smiled at his wife who was watching the road.

The Benton place was set back off the road and there were big trees in the front yard where Elliot had swings and played Tarzan and Robin Hood. There were not many boys his age there so he was alone a great deal. Sometimes he went to play with some boys named Joe and Buck who lived nearer town, but one day something happened and he did not like it there again.

"Ell-yut's a sis-sy, Ell-yut's a sis-sy," the two taunted.

"I am not, either. I am not."

"Where's your daddy, Ell-yut?" Joe teased, not yet satisfied.

"He's in Atlanta selling things."

Buck's mother came on the porch to put down some bottles. "What's going on out here?" she asked.

The boys snickered and moved off, When she had gone back

into the house Buck said, "Ell-yut has two mothers," and he and Joe bent double in exaggerated laughter.

Elliot stared at them, puzzled. He went home that afternoon and started to ask his mother if a grandmother and a mother were the same thing. Something stopped him and he did not. He wondered why that was funny.

The women where Buck and Joe lived were always going across their back yards to visit the people next door in their kitchens or to borrow an egg. Elliot had seen them stand together in their back yards with their aprons rolled over their arms and heard them talking about other women and about their husbands and about the groceries they bought. When women came to the Benton place it was always in the afternoons and they sat in the stiff chairs in the good living room. They would stay a little while and Ma would serve them tea from the big silver service before they left. Elliot always thought about what his father had said about neighbors.

Over the years it was Mrs. Adams who came the most and stayed the longest. She had come the day they moved in, with a covered tray of food for their lunch. She had pushed open the new gate and come in the house admiring the large rooms and so pleased to have new people out that way. She came to see Ma a lot after that. She was the only one who could listen to Ma talk all afternoon without getting real fidgety. Ma would look around her and say how the springs in the sofa needed fixing. And then she would say how Robert was going to have the house painted in the spring. On winter days when he had stayed indoors, Elliot had shuddered as he heard her thin, refined voice keep up a monotonous dialogue for hours.

"Of course, country doctors didn't get much in those days, but my family always managed pretty well. I used to play the piano a lot then to take up my time," she would say and look over at the old piano in the corner that had several pieces of ivory gone from its keys.

On these occasions his mother always ended by crying. She would hold a white linen handkerchief to her nose and sniffle awhile. "There's just nothing left for Elliot, just nothing. What will he do with a silver service with no place to put it? If Robert — if Robert . . ." Mrs. Adams always hushed her here and violet scent floated out as the handkerchief moved up to her eyes, and she would shake in her misery.

When Elliot was old enough to have model airplanes he went out to the back to work when Ma would start her talking. Most of the time he worked by himself, but sometimes three or four boys would come home with him after school. Elliot was usually the oldest in the group and he took a lot of time to explain how to fix things. He almost always ended by doing it himself because the others lost patience and gave up easily.

One day he got mad and pulled a wrench away from Buck.

"That's all right," Buck yelled. "Take it and keep your old wrench. My mother doesn't like me to come over here anyway."

After that he was alone more than ever. He told Ma the others didn't have time to do things like that. "They don't know how, anyway. They're just in the way." Elliot felt the same way about that as he had the time over at Buck's house.

Sometimes his father sat on the side porch with his feet on the banisters and watched him work. Once in a while he got up out of his chair and went out to help Elliot.

"Where'd you learn how to do that?" he asked one afternoon when they were working on a motor.

"At the Repair Garage watchin' ol' Jim Blakeman doing it. He's good. Makes 'em go like bran' new."

"Yeah? Wanta go to th' game with me tonight?"

He was playing baseball with several of the boys one day in the spring when Elliot turned his ankle trying to make a base. He picked the boy up and carried him to his room to the big brass bed.

"Just hold your breath. I got to strap that up for you." His hands were firm but kind and he kept up a one-sided conversation while he worked.

"Guess you'll get a little rest, Boy. Have to keep off this foot a couple of days. Reckon your Ma'll have some company to talk to if you don't read all the time you're up here. Might even bring your supper to you if you act real nice. It won't hurt you to stay still awhile." He pushed the boy back as he started to get up. "Just rest a little, Boy."

The summer Elliot was sixteen he got a job in the mill in town. He did not like the work, but the other boys all worked and he had to have some spending money from somewhere. Robert Benton did not stay home much, and when he took his trips it was a tight squeeze for Ma to pay the bills and have any left over.

Ma was happy about his job. She packed his lunch every morning and always had a clean pair of overalls ready for him.

"Mr. Martin says you certainly do learn fast. He might hire you when you get through college, Elliot, if you do real well now. But you really ought to try and get there on time more often. It isn't being fair to yourself." Elliot would stuff his breakfast without commenting and get out of the house quickly. Ma always found fault.

Elliot went out with a girl for the first time that summer he had the job. He stood awkwardly on one foot with his hands first in his pocket and then behind his back asking the girl across the street to go with him to a movie.

"I can't go tonight, Elliot," she said.

His self-confidence grew and he was persistent. Three weeks later she agreed to go to the junior class play. He went into the lobby of the high school that night feeling self-conscious, not wanting to look at the people he went to school with every day.

"Why, Sally," someone said. He saw her embarrassed smile and wondered if his tie was crooked. The boy he knew Sally dated sometimes just looked at her and laughed to the boy beside him. Elliot didn't know them very well; he never saw them around at lunch time, and he began to feel as if he were somewhere he should not be. The feeling grew worse during the play and he was glad to get rid of the girl at her door.

But the next week he tried again. "I can't, Elliot." Her tone said she meant it, and he recognized it. He thought about the girl who had said, "Why, Sally!"

That night his mother had been more quiet than usual, watching him read a *Popular Mechanics* while she was knitting. He turned the pages idly, not watching them, seeing her moving fingers. Then he spoke to her.

"Ma, what's the matter with Dad?"

She stopped the needles and looked at him, then went on. "Why, whatever made you ask that? Hasn't he always been good to you?"

Elliot watched her, surprised at the steadiness he felt in her all of a sudden. "Mr. Martin said something. He and some of the men were talking, and I heard them. And a girl said something too. They all did that night, I know they all did. Is it all true, Ma? Is it all true?" It came out fast and blurred, like a frightened child who wanted to be told something different whether he could believe it or not.

She had cried a little then; but she had told him. Then she said again and again, "He's always been good to you, Elliot; he's always been so good to you." He had understood then why she had to find fault, why she had to talk when there wasn't anything to say.

When Robert Benton came home again Elliot did not ask him to help with the planes. He ate his breakfast and left, and came in to read and hear Ma talk to two men who did not listen to her. One night his father said, "Where are you going to college, Son? Made up your mind yet?"

"I'm not going. I'm going to join the navy."

Ma looked at him and started to cry. He left the room but he could hear their voices, one pathetic, one strong and impatient, from his bedroom where he lay with the lights out. "I'm going to join the navy," he repeated the words to himself. The idea was new to him. He had said it downstairs to shock them, to hurt his father. He said it again. It sounded independent. He liked the sound,

He got extra leave to go home for Ma's funeral two years later. Mrs. Adams came over the night he got there and carried him and his father some hot coffee and sat with them awhile. She told them what a fine woman his mother had been. "There aren't many women like that," she said with a side glance to Robert Benton. He sat with his head bent, not saying anything. He sat the same way the next night, after the funeral. Nobody came to the house after that day and they were alone together.

Elliot stayed home a week. He did not see many people. Most of the ones his age were gone, and he avoided Mrs. Adams. He worked on the yard and fixed the gate in front. At night he stayed home and looked at magazines. His father did not talk to him.

It was raining the morning he left. His father took him to the station and pushed fifty dollars into his hand. Just before time to get on the train he said, "Come home when you get out and go to college, Son." He saw the look in Elliot's eyes and hurried on. "She wanted you to, Elliot. You've got to do something. You can't just stay in the navy all your life. Come home, Boy, and we'll try again. I'll get the house all fixed up and we can rent part of it. I'll start something here, on my own, and

you can go in with me." He was talking to Elliot's back. From the window Elliot saw him standing alone, watching the train pull out.

Mrs. Adams wired Elliot at the time of the wreck, but he did not go home to see his father buried. The day the funeral was to be he walked restlessly over the seacoast town where he was stationed. He thought of the time he had hurt his ankle playing baseball. Once he saw a man with his hat tilted down and he started toward him to speak to him, to see if it were his father. Then he caught himself. That night he dreamed of two graves in a cemetery with a gate leading into it. The gate swung open slowly and he heard two voices, one pleading, one impatient.

Elliot had been staring at the gate for almost an hour when one of the auctioneers tapped him on the shoulder. He started and his voice jerked when he answered the man.

"Just take 'em downstairs until the storage man gets here."

He got up to leave. The noise outside was gone now. Everyone had left. On his way downstairs he looked in an open door and saw the dresser that had belonged to his mother. His image was reflected in its mirror as he hesitated before going on, through the house, through the gate.

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